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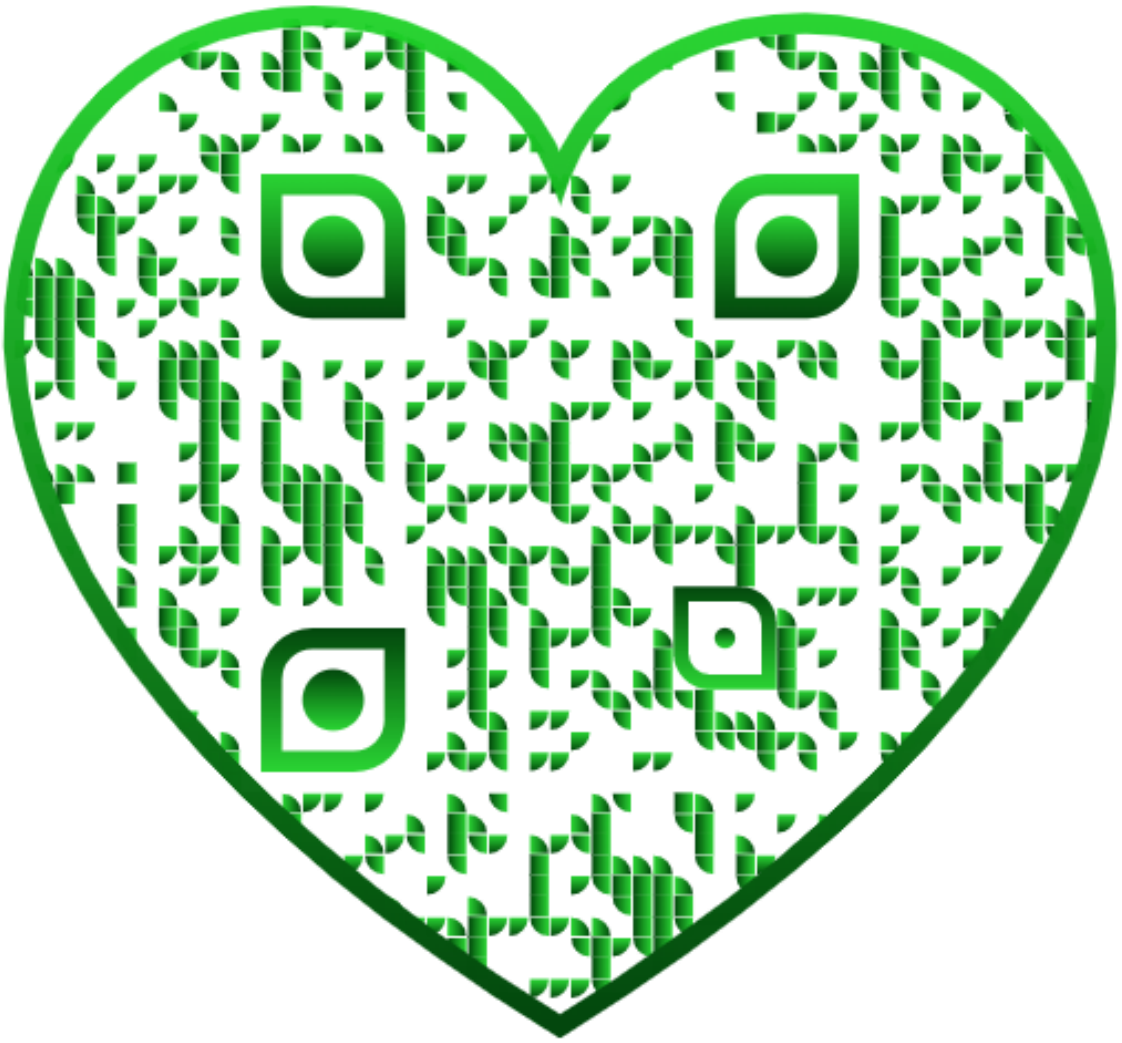
ISSUE 341



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METAL HAMMER

Future PLC, 1-10 Praed Mews, Paddington, London, W2 1QY
Web: www.metalhammer.com
Letters: metalhammer@futurenet.com

Editorial
Editor **Merlin Alderslade**
merlin.alderslade@futurenet.com
Deputy Editor **Eleanor Goodman**
eleanor.goodman@futurenet.com
Production Editor **Vanessa Thorpe**
vanessa.thorpe@futurenet.com
Reviews Editor **Jonathan Selzer**
jonathan.selzer@futurenet.com
Art Editor **Louise Brock**
louise.brock@futurenet.com
Acting Online Editor **Dave Everley**
dave.everley@futurenet.com
Content Director – Music **Scott Rowley**

Contributors
Dean Brown, Cheryl Carter, Richard Chamberlain, Chris Chantler, Alec Chillingworth, Toby Cook, Ali Cooper, Joe Daly, Alex Deller, Malcolm Dome, John Doran, Dave Everley, Jerry Ewing, Paris Fawcett, Connie Gordon, Stephen Hill, Emma Johnston, Dom Lawson, Dannii Leivers, Dave Ling, Sophie Maughan, Edwin McFee, Chris McGarel, Ken McIntyre, Joel McIver, Tom O'Boyle, Dayal Patterson, Greg Prato, Adam Rees, Alastair Riddell, Natasha Scharf, Yasmine Summan, Nick Thorpe, James Weaver, Christina Wenig, Jon Wiederhorn, Holly Wright, Nik Young

Cover Photography: Travis Shinn
Cover Manipulation: MagicTorch **Design:** John Woolford
Image Manipulation: Gary Stuckey

Photography
Ben Bentley, Justin Borucki, Derek Bremner, Steve Brown, Janson Bulpin, Stephanie Cabral, Duncan Everson, Nick Fancher, Mick Hutson, Will Ireland, Simon Kallas, Tina Korhonen, Marie Korner, John McMurtrie, Kevin Nixon, Jake Owens, Tom Russell, Jeremy Saffer, Ester Segarra, James Sharrock, Travis Shinn, Frank White, Dani Wilgress, Neil Zlozower
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Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Commercial Manager – Louder brands **Kate Colgan**
kate.colgan@futurenet.com
Account Director **Olly Papierowski**
olly.papierowski@futurenet.com
Account Director **Helen Hughes**
helen.hughes@futurenet.com

International Licensing
Metal Hammer is available for licensing. Contact the Licensing team to discuss partnership opportunities.
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com

Subscriptions
Email enquiries **help@magazinesdirect.com**
UK orderline & enquiries **0330 333 1113**
Overseas order line and enquiries **+44 330 333 1113**
Online orders & enquiries **www.magazinesdirect.com**
Head of subscriptions **Sharon Todd**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
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Management
MD – Future Passions **Angela Davies**
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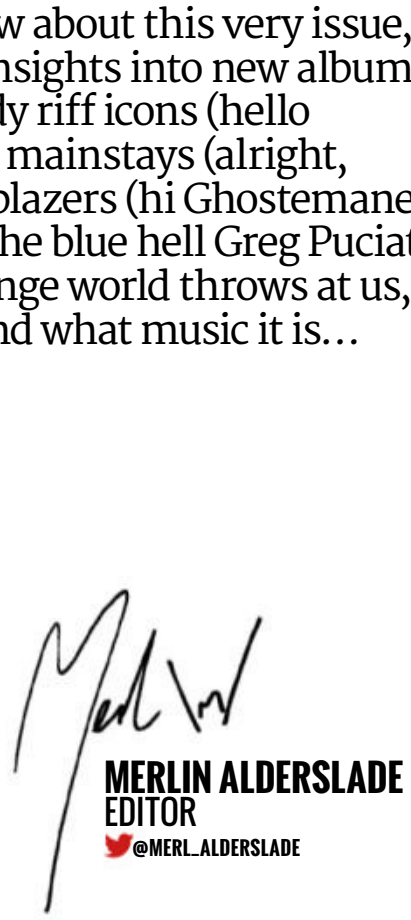
THE MOST METAL BAND THERE IS

NO IFS. NO BUTS. No arguments. No band has so proudly and loudly embodied heavy metal as Judas Priest. They love it. They live it. And, for 50 stunning years, they've defined it. While their grand 50th birthday celebrations may have been slightly sent off-course by that whole pesky global pandemic thing, we couldn't let up the chance to raise our glasses to the band that have seen and done it all, and are hell-bent on continuing to fly the flag for metal as proudly as ever. Here's to you, lads.

As it happens, metal continues to have an absolute blinder in 2020. Want proof? How about this very issue, which features interviews and insights into new albums courtesy of everyone from beardy riff icons (hello Mastodon!) to symphonic metal mainstays (alright, Amaranthe?) to trap metal trailblazers (hi Ghostemane and Backxwash) and whatever the blue hell Greg Puciato is up to now. Whatever this strange world throws at us, we'll always have the music – and what music it is…

HORNS UP!



MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR
@MERL_ALDERSLADE

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MEET THE BAND

SCOTT ROWLEY
CONTENT DIRECTOR
A former Editor of our sister mag, *Classic Rock*, Scott now presides as Content Director for Future's music division, overseeing the likes of *Classic Rock*, *Prog*, *Louder*, *Guitarist*, *Total Guitar*, *Bass Player*, *Guitar World* and *MusicRadar*. Oh, and us, of course. Which is nice.

PARIS FAWCETT
WRITER
This month, Paris got the lowdown on the new band from Bullet For My Valentine's ex-drummer, Michael 'Moose' Thomas. Kill The Lights also features members of Glamour Of The Kill and Still Remains, so if you like those bands, you should head over to p.31 pronto.

JAKE OWENS
PHOTOGRAPHER
A man who loves deathcore so much that he once followed Thy Art Is Murder around Europe (OK, technically they employed him to, but still), Jake is also one helluva wedding photographer. If you want your beautiful day to be 6.66% more metal, you know who to ask.

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LISTEN TO THIS MAG!
Get your free, 7-hour playlist featuring tons of the bands in this issue from tinyurl.com/Hammer341Mix

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"A HEADY, HEAVY AND MELODIOUS BREW"
CLASSIC ROCK MAGAZINE

"FLYING THE FLAG FOR MODERN HARD ROCK"
THE MOSHVILLE TIMES

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THE CROBAR CALLS LAST ORDERS

LAST MONTH, LONDON'S most legendary rock bar announced that it was closing, bringing an end to an era. The Crobar, housed in the heart of Soho, had been an institution of the London metal scene for almost two decades, famously housing rock heavyweights like Dave Grohl, Lars Ulrich, Juliette Lewis, Scott Ian, Chad Smith, Robb Flynn and members of Slayer over the years, and even attracting patronage from pop superstars Lady Gaga, Pink and Justin Bieber.

"Years and years of hard work by pub, bar and venue owners across the country have been destroyed in the blink of an eye, and all because of the greed of a few 'land barons'," said owner Richard Thomas when explaining the decision to close, adding that he aims to "open a new Crobar with both a bar and a live music venue" at some point over the next year.

Whatever the future holds, it marks a firm end to Soho being a centre point for rock music in the capital, and those sweaty, chaotic nights out will be dearly missed. Here's to you, guys, and thanks for the memories – we'll be raising a Bulleit and Coke in your honour.

MAIN: COURTESY OF CROBAR. INSET: WENN RIGHTS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

THE HOT TOPIC

THE FIGHT FOR BEIRUT

Lebanon's capital was decimated by an explosion that displaced hundreds of thousands. One musician from the region is calling on metal to help

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

IT WAS THE explosion seen around the world. On August 4, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate detonated in a warehouse in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, killing close to 200 people and leaving some 300,000 homeless. The blast, caught on camera from various angles around the city and going viral across social media, was so severe and awe-inspiring that many wondered if a nuclear bomb had been set off. For Anthony Kaoteon, founder of Lebanese extreme metallers and 2018 Golden God Global Metal Award winners, Kaoteon, it meant yet more heartbreak for a homeland that had already been through immense political turmoil, war and corruption.

"The damage is severe," he tells us from his adopted home in the Netherlands. "The Lebanese are still in shock. My dad keeps telling me, 'Anthony, this was a nuclear explosion for us. When I saw the mushroom above me in the air, I saw my life backwards and thought we are all going to die!'"

While it is seen as a vital cultural and commercial hotspot for the Middle East, Lebanon is also a country with a turbulent history. Despite its modest size, its complex inter-community relations and vulnerable location – sharing borders with both Syria and Israel – have seen it become a centre-point for conflict. The country became embroiled in a 15-year civil war that lasted from 1975-1990, and has been at the centre of a refugee crisis across the last decade or so that has increased tensions in the region. The warehouse explosion in August has only brought more strife to a nation on its knees – and it's a situation that was exacerbated even further by the sitting government quitting a couple of weeks later.

"This is the worst period that the country has ever seen," says Anthony, though the frontman is hopeful that the people of his place of birth can come together and force positive change in the face of increasing adversity. "Power to the people who are shouting and protesting for change," he adds. "It is time to unite and be strong. Do not be divided into fragments. Stand up for your rights and believe that, united, you will prevail."

ANTHONY HAD RECENTLY completed recording a new album by his death/thrash metal project, Death Tribe, when he decided to do something more to raise awareness of the issues in Lebanon. Of course, he decided to utilise the thing he knows best: metal.

"WE ARE METALHEADS, WE FIGHT FOR WHAT IS RIGHT!"

A wrecked cargo ship and devastated silo after the massive chemical explosion in Beirut port on August 4

"I had finished the recording of the second album of Death Tribe," he explains. "I was (and still am) in the process of creating a full, animated movie that should be watched along with the [album's] music, with Dronicon Films from Argentina. As my home country was going through extreme situations, I had a track about [Lebanon's issues] on the album called *Thawra*. When the explosion took place, I called the team from Dronicon Films to change the animation [on the *Thawra* section of the film] by adding explosion scenes. We released that video so that we help raise awareness about what is happening in Beirut and raise some money to help."

Through the track release and associated donations, Anthony was able to raise thousands to send back to Beirut – but as he explains, there is still plenty more to do, and metalheads can play their part.

PATRICK BAZ/GETTY

Anthony Kaoteon lives in the Netherlands now, but his heart is still in his homeland

"So far, between music, friends, colleagues and connections, we were able to raise about $6,000 worth of donations to send back home, which will hopefully contribute in some way to comfort those in need," he notes. "But it is not only about raising money. I never made profit from music as I invest it all on the production and creating better music for Death Tribe, Kaoteon or other musical projects. What really matters here is reaching mediums like *Metal Hammer* and other outlets so that we can talk about Beirut. The people and the country are victims of years and years of oppression. There are so many countries in the world that are passing through horrible times and Lebanon is one of them that has always fought and somehow survived. Today, Lebanon needs us more than ever as it is bleeding faster than it can recover. Keep talking about Beirut – we are metalheads, we fight for what is right! We are rebels and we have to walk the walk, not only scream on stage without making a difference in this world."

While Anthony has plenty more work planned with his two bands – the new Death Tribe album/full animated film will see release soon, while Kaoteon have 11 tracks recorded with At The Gates legend Adrian Erlandsson behind the drum kit – he's keen to make sure the fight for Lebanon's future doesn't let up.

"Donate, donate, donate!" he pleads. "Donate to the Lebanese Red Cross, to Offre Joie, to Impact Lebanon and other NGOs, and keep talking about Beirut."

YOU CAN DONATE TO LEBANON VIA DEATH TRIBE'S OFFICIAL BANDCAMP AT WWW.DEATHTRIBEOFFICIAL.BANDCAMP.COM

10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

FESTIVALS ARE BACK!
We may have to wait a while, but how good is it to see Download, Bloodstock, Arctangent et all with full line-ups for next year? We're already dusting off our wellies in anticipation

ROB HALFORD'S BOOK LOOKS GOOD
The Judas Priest legend's first autobiography is out now, and it looks stacked with great stories. Someone should put that lad and his band on a magazine cover...

THERE'S A SNAKE NAMED AFTER JAMES HETFIELD

Atheris hetfieldi is an African Bush Viper and is officially more metal than most snakes. Just don't tread on it. See what we did there? HA HA HAAAAAA!!!

OPETH ARE DOING A 30TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR NEXT YEAR
And yes, you read that right – we're all old now.

NXTUK IS METAL
The WWE's UK developmental division even brought in UK punk-metallers Wargasm to soundtrack their rebooted new show. Fair play.

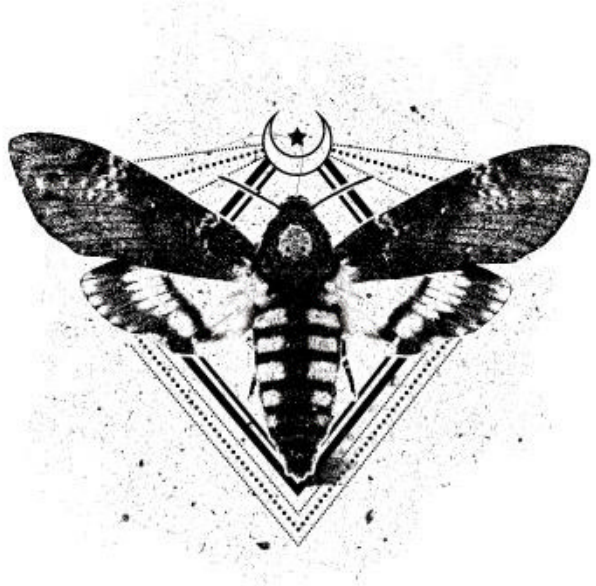
KERRY KING ISN'T DONE YET
He has a ton of new material on the go, and it'll definitely be seeing the light of day eventually. Our prediction? Slayer-y. Very, very Slayer-y.

DEFTONES HAVE A BEER
It's called White Pony Double Dry Hopped IPA. It looks pretty good, to be honest.

DARK NIGHTS: DEATH METAL IS THE MOST METAL COMIC EVER
And as if to prove the point, Dave Lombardo and Zakk Wylde are amongst the names contributing to the soundtrack for a new animated adaptation! Andy Biersack voices Batman. He's pretty good!

THE GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF IS ROCK'N'ROLL NOW
Tom DeLonge spongecakes? Lottie shouting out Viking metal? We have absolutely no idea what's going on, but we like it.

YOU CAN BUY A CANDLE THAT SMELLS LIKE LEMMY
The Ace Of Spades candle is a thing and smells like whiskey, oak and smoke, apparently. So there you go. Light one up and sniff away.



DID YOU FEEL SILLY IN THAT MAKE-UP?

And other needless barbs and polite questions you put to Devildriver frontman Dez Fafara

WORDS: ALI COOPER • PICTURES: STEPHANIE CABRAL

WHILE THE REST of the music industry waits out a pandemic to discover its fate, Devildriver frontman and all-round metal mastermind Dez Fafara is busier than ever. While juggling work for his own label, Oracle Records, and preparing the world for the release of a double Devildriver record, he squeezed in a few moments to answer queries sent in by you guys, from bringing back Coal Chamber make-up to Devildriver's plans for world domination. Step aside, coronavirus…

Did you feel a bit silly having to slap on spooky make-up again for the Coal Chamber reunion?
Brendan Smith (email)

"No, I loved it to be honest with you! I'm a gothic punk rock kid that only found heavy metal because I found Motörhead. I love it violent and aggressive, and all those things that go along with what metal is, which is why I got into metal. Otherwise, I'm a punk rock kid so that lends itself to eyeliner and all the other shit. Now I look at what's popular right now, looking at some of the bands out there, it looks like they could be taking from what Coal Chamber did. I see Avatar and think, 'Thank god we did what we did back in the day or maybe there would be no ground breaking open for a band like that.' Which is me giving accolades actually, not saying if we never did that, you'd never have a band. I'm saying that back in the day when we broke that out, there were only a few bands doing it. When the harsh critics got the gold records thrown at them, they understood we were doing something right!"

What have you been writing about for the new Devildriver album?
Jo Bersden (email)

"The reason why it's called *Dealing With Demons* and the reason I needed a double record to do this was that I'm moving in a different direction lyrically in the future, and before I do, I have gotta get some things off my chest. Invariably they are things I've written about my whole life; I'm writing about my demons and society's demons and society's ills as well. The first single, *Keep Away From Me*, is about me being terribly agoraphobic. I've been socially distancing my whole life, I don't do well in crowds, I'm not gonna show up to your Grammy awards party. If you invite me somewhere where there's a bunch of people I don't know, there's a chance I'll tell you I'll be there but be prepared for me to call you an hour or two before to tell you I can't find my car keys. *Iona* represents society's ills and people who enjoy a certain kind of horror. Horror to me is Dracula, The Mummy, ghosts, what's around the corner, the shadow in the background. Somehow, somewhere it became slashers – for example, the guy who says *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is his favourite movie. He plainly killed 15 women and skinned them in that movie – why would you gravitate to that? Why do people run home every night to watch *CSI* or murder porn TV? I'm asking about that… what has triggered society to make that their favourite thing? *Nest Of Vipers* is about how people and their loyalty are easily bought. There's a chorus that says, *'She sleeps with bones beside her / She sleeps in a nest of vipers'*, and that's about how women can be bought and sold – and that's not prostitution, I'm talking loyalty."

Devildriver: priority no.1 right now

Who's the toughest motherfucker in the heavy metal scene? (You can't say yourself!)
James Richardson (email)

"I would never say me! Who's the toughest motherfucker? What is 'tough'? Is 'tough' the guy who can survive 30 years in the music industry or is it the guy who can walk into a bar and beat everybody's ass? I don't know how to answer that. All I can say is this: in a brawl, I've never lost and my nose has been broken three times."

Dez has a message for the Coal Chamber critics

“IN A BRAWL, I’VE NEVER LOST”

What would be your one piece of advice to a young band?
Cat Olah (email)
"Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. Play in your local town until you sell out your local club, get all your social medias online, get a YouTube, Instagram, Facebook etc. Don't get caught up in the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll thing – get caught up in the rock'n'roll thing and the rest will come. Really pay attention to your craft, that's what I'd say."

Will there ever be a new Coal Chamber album?
Joe Cadec (Facebook)
"I'm not gonna say no because we've all spoken. Mikey [Cox, drums] is running a very large general contracting company at this moment, Meegs [Rascón, guitars] is doing something in another band for the moment, Nadja [Peulen, bass] is waiting. The main thing for me is that the relationship is all good after numerous fallouts in the beginning and after some stuff went horribly wrong when we got back together to release *Rivals*. The vibe in that camp is very cool at the moment and we all have each other's backs. During [Dez's wife] Anahstasia's cancer, they were all writing and calling all the time so it was really incredible to see them come back into my life. I'm not gonna say yes or no. I wouldn't put it past us but right now I'm definitely concentrating on Devildriver."

Do you ever think of taking Coal Chamber songs and beefing them up with Devildriver?
@J1sonofagun (Twitter)
"We've done that – we've played a few of them live and that's only because I missed playing the songs live and if god forbid something happened to me and I never got to play those songs again or people didn't get to hear them again. They sound incredible done by Devildriver with two guitars, it's a lot heavier to be honest. For me, it was a good time to bust one or two of those out at a Devildriver show. People always go crazy and it's really cool to see."

Will there be a collab between you and your son?
Jeanie Bean (Facebook)
"Yes, my son Simon collaborated on *Fighting Words* when he was nine years old and on this new record, *Dealing With Demons Vol. I*, he's on the choruses of

"I'M NOT GONNA SAY NO TO NEW COAL CHAMBER"

Dez Fafara isn't saying he's a double-hard bastard... but he *is* a double-hard bastard

You Give Me A Reason To Drink and he sounds incredible. He's working on his first record right now that we plan on releasing next year, so look out for me getting ready to pass the torch to him very soon! His lows are lower than me, his high screams are higher than me, his clean voice is absolutely incredible. If I fell ill, he could go fill in for me with Devildriver and he could slay it. He came out on stage with me in LA the last time and 3,000 people went insane when they saw him. He did an incredible job on *Clouds Over California* with me."

Would you ever consider a tour of the first DD album?
@paddy_oo8 (Twitter)
"Yes, we've been considering that. If lockdown or anything more happens and we can't get out to tour, we're gonna start doing pay-per-view shows and play all the records in their entirety. If we can't come over there from the US and there's no touring in the US next year, it's time to start doing PPV shows. We'd use Oracle Live, which is a PPV company we started in February and it's been doing incredibly. We were Wacken's streaming partner, we've done Black Veil Brides and Body Count, plus we're getting ready to do some very large bands in the next week or two. We've got relationships with venues and camera crews all over the world."

Have you ever thought about a solo album, and if so which musical direction do you think it would take?
@chriscull8o (Twitter)
"I have thought about it and I just don't know because I'm real good in a group atmosphere. The direction of it would ultimately be way heavier than anything you guys have ever gotten from me to be honest. That could be in the works or it could not be in the works, I can't really say at this point, but you guys should expect something insanely heavy when you do get it, *if* you do get it."

What's your plan for 2021? Also, European Tour, right?
@_StefanoDV_ (Twitter)
"I wish I knew! There's a lot of plans up in the air to try and tour and I just don't know what's going to happen. There's no touring at the moment in the US, and I don't know if we're gonna be able to come overseas because of what America's going through right now. Here's the thing: we never script a movie, we always watch the movie play itself out, and now I'm having to find myself sitting in the seat watching the movie play out. As soon as we get to the end, Stefano, I'll let you know!"

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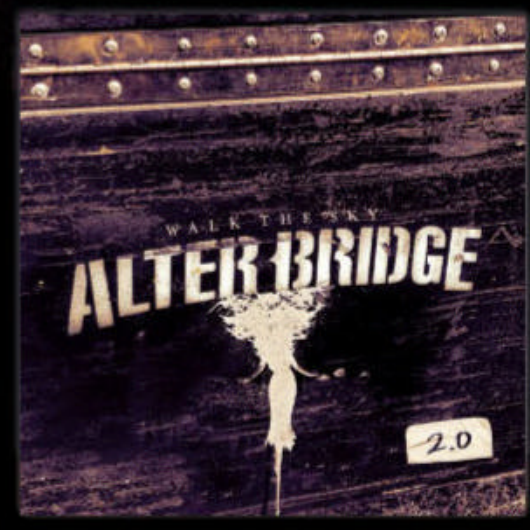

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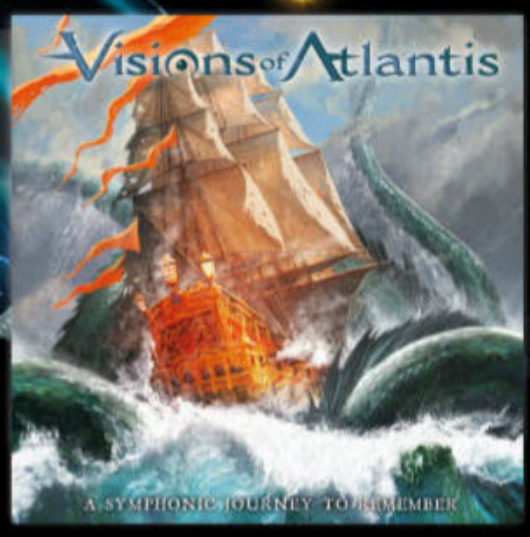

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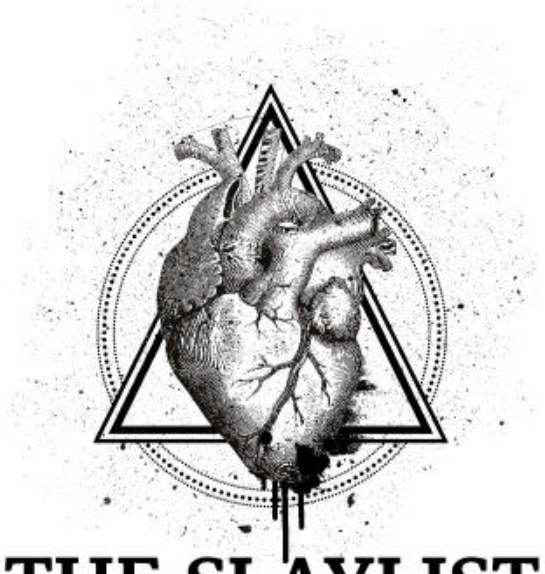

THE SLAYLIST

BACKXWASH

Backxwash has made us a mix... but you'd better brace yourself for some uneasy listening

Montreal's genre-mashing trap-metaller made us a mix just as varied as her music

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

"THE FIRST THING I wanna shout out is **DANNY BROWN**'s *Atrocity Exhibition*. I feel like there are ways to craft an album and I feel like that is the perfectly crafted album. It's an album about just falling down, falling apart, and I've never experienced the concept of a descent be that well executed. It actually feels like you're going on the descent with him, the production on it is phenomenal, the rapping on it is phenomenal, the experimental and weird beats he is rapping over, and doing that so well, it's just incredible. It's inspiring, and it helped shaped me in a way that it means I'm not afraid when it comes to taking chances with my music. **BLACK DRESSES**'s *Peaceful As Hell* encapsulates so many emotions over this sensitive but optimistic sound and production. It shaped me as well, mostly in my vocal parts. I hear the way they take chances vocally, from enunciating your words to screaming and shouting, and it inspired me as a trans person, because I have a very complicated relationship with my own voice. It's extremely motivating for me to hear people take their voice to so many different places.

JPEGMAFIA's *Veteran* is incredible; it's just the perfect example of someone telling you not to do something and you end up doing it anyway. It's so chaotic a composition that it's beautiful, I just love that approach to making music. I have to pick the first album by **BLACK SABBATH**, too. Growing up in Zambia and finding out these people existed and it wasn't too taboo to explore a wildly different perspective, especially one coming from outside of a Christian environment, was incredible. It's just so haunting and doomy as well, it all just came together in this perfect package, one of the first albums to ever scare me. I'd have to go to **DEATH GRIPS**' *The Money Store* as well – incredible record. The amount of kooky shit that happens on that album would take at least 10 hands to count. Such a weird but catchy record. As a vocalist, seeing and hearing MC Ride approach rhymes like that was one of the weirdest experiences I've ever had, I'm just such a massive fan of the band.

As a big fan of horror and trying to incorporate horror elements into my music, I should give credit to **THREE 6 MAFIA**'s *Mystic Stylez*. They did it incredibly well. In terms of rap, I don't think anyone comes as close as they do for that eerie feeling, it really gets to you – you feel uncomfortable but at the same time the rapping comes in and it's just so dope! You're sitting there feeling really creeped out and paranoid but you can't help nod your head and go, 'That flow is dope!' A really wonderful record is *Are You Experienced* by **JIMI HENDRIX**. About six or seven years ago I went through a huge Jimi Hendrix phase, and the composition and the approach to sound was so wildly out of pocket at the time, so experimental. It's one thing to talk about the way he approached the guitar, or the weirdness of the playing, but the songwriting is just amazing as well. He's not just a soloist, he can write and craft these perfect songs. Add that to the drumming of Mitch Mitchell and you've got one of the most phenomenal albums that's ever been made. It's responsible for me thinking about different ways to consider sound and songwriting in general.

Lucas Acid by **MOODIE BLACK** has this unbelievable approach to making noise and hip hop, it's extremely well done. And it introduced new trans perspectives into the genre as well. It's an incredible record, and it helped in me finding my sound. I'd probably add **2PAC**'s *Me Against The World*, I really love his approach to flow. His flow was really melodic and it took you on a journey, it had so much rhythm to it as well; you could dance to an a cappella 2Pac rap. I think finally I have to mention *The Origin Of My Depression* by **UBOA**. The whole record is a harrowing and cathartic record, but one that I really relate to a lot." H

LISTEN NOW
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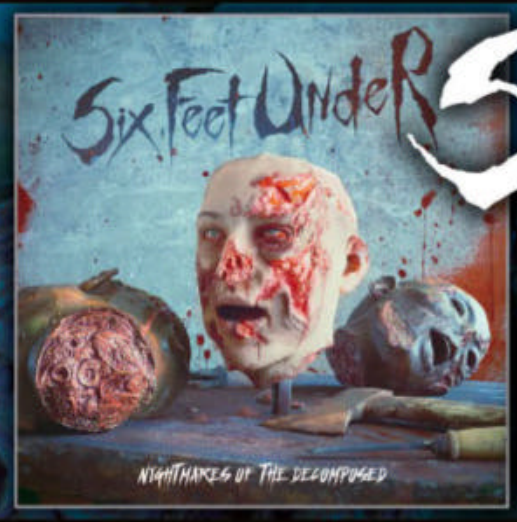

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LIFE LESSONS

SHAVO ODADJIAN

System Of A Down's bassist has a new band on the go, as well as a life's worth of lessons from the music industry to share

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

SHAVO ODADJIAN HAS come prepared. "I wrote down a long list of life lessons I've learned myself and from other people," he says enthusiastically. System Of A Down's bassist needs to be organised right now. COVID-19 might have forced the metal icons off the road this summer, but he has multiple other projects on the go, including his newly launched hip hop/rock band, North Kingsley and his successful weed-centred lifestyle brand, 22Red. "There's always new stuff to learn," he says. "Every single day."

TREAT PEOPLE HOW YOU WANT TO BE TREATED

"Always. I am good to everyone because I want that back. Everyone's equal too – it doesn't matter who you are or who you're talking to. If you meet me, you're gonna meet the guy you're talking to, always open and nice and cool. I'm gonna shake your hand and stare in your eyes. Unless someone's an asshole to me; I'm just not going to be cool with that person at all."

MISTAKES ARE GOOD

"Everybody makes mistakes. I make mistakes daily, and that's cool. A long as you don't make the same mistake over and over. I teach my kids this constantly: it's OK to make a mistake, but it's not OK to make the same mistake over and over."

FAILURE IS A WEAPON

"Me, I'm a doer, I like to try things. Years ago, I started this website that was like the first Soundcloud. I started this thing, I had this great idea, I teamed up with a bunch of people, but my partner screwed me. I wasn't attentive, I wasn't there 24 hours. I trusted him: 'He'll take care of that, let me go take care of my own thing.' I was mixing the [late-00s hip hop side-project] Achozen record while my partner was running what I created mentally, and it fell apart. I got screwed for I don't know how much money and time and effort. It was a failure. But I turned that failure into a weapon. I don't do that anymore. Now, any venture I do, I'm on top of it. I don't let anybody just do it. No more sitting in the backseat. I'm always in the front seat driving. Or at least in the passenger seat…"

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY, ALWAYS

"I'd rather have a little bit of something great than a lot of something not great. I'd rather have two quality friends than have 10 people that call themselves my friends who are bullshit. I'd rather own two pairs of shoes that I wear all day long and night than 30 pairs of shoes that I just look at. That applies to my music, too. I have to. I have a reputation here. If I'm gonna drop something, it better be good."

OWN YOUR LIFE

"Be in charge of what you're doing. Don't let others do it for you. They'll make a mistake and it will fall on you. You should be in charge of your life."

BE HONEST

"Honesty and loyalty are so important in this world. It's very rare that people are honest and loyal at the same time – there are so many things that pull you away from that. You just need to be strong, because at the end of the day that's all you have: your honesty, your loyalty, your integrity. Finish what you started. If you say you're gonna do something, do it. Otherwise people are gonna say, 'That guy, he's not reliable', and it's really hard to overcome that. When my kids promise something, I go, 'Look in my eyes. Promise and do it.'"

SELF-CARE IS KEY

"Take the time to meditate, take the time to work out. If you're not strong physically, your mind won't be strong either. I lost a lot of weight in the last four years. There was a time when I was drinking, partying, smoking, doing everything. I quit cigarettes, I quit pills, I quit bad food, I hit the gym four or five times a week. You're on a voyage, and if you're not healthy you're gonna get stopped in your tracks. You know how you're on a plane and they say put your own mask on first if it goes down and then your kids', because if you don't then you'll die and your kids won't know what to do. You gotta help yourself so you can help everyone around you."

LOVE WHAT YOU'RE DOING

"If you don't love what you're doing, you won't be happy. Success comes from loving what you do. You're having fun, you're a successful person. Nothing to do with money. Happiness and your comfort in life – that's success."

CONSISTENCY, PASSION AND QUALITY WINS THE GAME

"It's a formula: that's the ingredients to winning. It's like 22Red. I've been a smoker since I was 20. When weed started becoming legal in America, people came up to me and said, 'We should name something 'Shavo this' or 'Shavo that.' I was like, 'No, I don't want to put my name on shit.' With 22Red, I make sure they're using the right soil, the right ingredients, no chemicals, nothing that makes you sick, I make sure the testing is done right every single time. Everything has to be that quality, every single time."

22 IS MY NUMBER

"April 22, that's my birthday. My kids were born two years and 22 days apart. I got married on May 22. I was 22 when System Of A Down got signed, and 44 when I started 22Red – 22 times two. That's why my jersey onstage is always '22'. It's just become a thing."

A FIRM HANDSHAKE GETS THE DEAL

"My dad taught me this. When you're shaking someone's hand, you need to make sure they understand you're shaking it because you believe it. Well, nowadays you don't shake hands any more 'cos of the pandemic, but you know what I mean. Eye contact, too. It's very important that you connect – don't look the other way when you're toasting someone with a drink. Look in their eyes. That's respect. [Wu Tang Clan mastermind and Achozen bandmate] RZA taught me that whole toasting thing, looking in someone's eyes. That guy is smart. He's a mentor to me. I was a fan of his band, now he's become one of my very best friends."

KEEP YOUR MIND OPEN

"You need to be always learning and taking things in. Never think

"I STARTED THE FIRST SOUNDCLOUD"

PRESS

Shavo is a wise man.
Listen to Shavo

Shavo is ace. But not as ace as he will be tomorrow

"RZA IS ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS NOW"

you know it all. Once you say, 'I know it all', it's over. Me, I'm still learning. I'm always learning. I'm gonna learn something from this conversation we're having."

PUT DOWN THE CELLPHONE…

"A cellphone has so much on there, it just scatters your brain. You don't even have time to do nothing anymore. Say I'm waiting on a phone call. I have 30 things I can do while I wait. I can check Instagram, I can do Snapchat, I can play a game. It creates attention deficit disorder, 'cos you're doing so many things at once. You lose focus."

…AND PICK UP A BOOK

"Reading is important. I see people, they go, 'Oh, I read – I read comments on Instagram and Twitter.' No, bro, that's not reading. Pick up a book and read that. It develops your vocabulary, it makes you more eloquent when you speak. I wish I'd done it more when I was younger. Now I read books galore. When I quit partying, I picked up a couple of self-help books. It was like, 'Wow, this works.' Your brain is a muscle. If you just dumb it out by watching things and moving from one thing to another, it's gonna waste away."

COMPETE AGAINST YOURSELF, NOT OTHER PEOPLE

"What I'm doing today, I'm gonna do better tomorrow. I don't look at what that person is doing, because that person has his own voyage. That person has his own life that he's living. I don't know what's going to happen to him today, I don't know what's going to happen to him tomorrow. But I know what happened to me yesterday, so I can build my tomorrow. You only have access to yourself, and it's you you're competing against. I strive for that. Always. I strive to be better tomorrow."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

"If you want to be good at something, you need to do that thing a lot. A lot of people pick something up and say, 'Oh, I'm doing it now… I bought this guitar, I'm playing it now.' But really they're not – they have it and they're looking at it, and they think they're doing it. They think they learned one chord and that's it, they're playing it. No, bro. Pick it up, play that same thing over and over every day. Watch what happens to you in a month. In a year. In three years. Think about what you'll be like then. If you want to do something, do it all the time and you'll be great at it."

NORTH KINGSLEY'S DEBUT EP, *VOL. 1*, IS OUT NOW VIA 22 RED MEDIA

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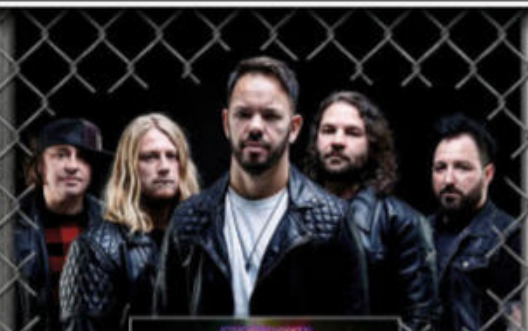

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IN THE STUDIO

EVILE

Seven years and three personnel changes since their last record, thrash metallers Evile are plotting their comeback… with a vengeance

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

IT'S BEEN A long slog for Evile. When they released their phenomenal debut, *Enter The Grave*, in 2007 they were Britain's answer to the flood of 00s thrash revival bands coming from the US. The next six years saw them release four more records (each landing on the US Top Heatseekers charts), before heading into limbo in 2013. Now they're back, working on a new album with a switched-up line-up including new member Adam Smith on guitar, plus long-time guitarist Ol Drake taking up vocal duties following the departure of his brother, Matt Drake. *Hammer* took a peek in the studio to see how things are with 'Old Rake' back in the saddle…

How does it feel to be back in the studio with Evile?
"It's good – like riding an old bike! It feels like we're starting exactly where we left off. Ben [Carter, drums] and Joel [Graham, bass] are my friends even outside of the band and we know Adam from Rip Tide really well, so everything has been very comfortable and cool."

It's been seven years since we last had an Evile record – how much material from those years is on the new record?
"All the songs are brand new. When I rejoined the band in 2018 [Ol initially left in 2013, releasing a solo record, *Old Rake*, in 2015], Evile basically hadn't done anything since 2013. I figured I'd get on with writing for the record and we had our ideas set out by June 2019, which sounds like a long time ago now! I didn't want to use older stuff. It didn't feel right; it *felt* older and didn't gel with what we wanted to go for this time around anyway."

THE FACTS

ALBUM:
5

STUDIO:
Backstage Studios, UK

PRODUCER:
Chris Clancy

EXPECT:
Headbanging, neck-snapping fury, played at 250mph and delivered like a cannonball to the face

You've swapped out producer Russ Russell this time for Chris Clancy…
"We love Russ, but we've recorded three albums with him and we don't want to do the same things again. This record should be different to the last three, but in a cool way because we're doing things with a more aggressive approach. I think I said the wrong thing in our statement [about my taking over vocal duties] because people think I'm going to go cookie monster, but basically… Matt is a *singer*-singer and really brings those melodies to our songs. My style is more rooted in older death metal – think early Sepultura, where it's aggressive but still hitting the notes!

You've played in a few bands, but have you ever been a vocalist?
"Not beyond backing vocals or singing in the shower! It'll be a challenge playing some of the Evile songs because the riffs and vocal melodies can take very different paths – I've no idea how Matt did some of the things he did."

When you first came around you were one of the brightest shining stars of the thrash revival scene. How do you feel about it looking back?
"I love that we are considered a band that was part of something that helped revive thrash in any way. I look back on that time with fondness. I remember starting out, playing crappy venues where people would come up and say, 'Why are you playing thrash? It's stupid, from the 80s and dead!' A few months later all the magazines were coming out talking about how thrash had come back and those same people were suddenly experts – fuck 'em! Ha ha!"

Do you see this as a new chapter in the Evile story, or more like a sequel?
"The way we're looking at it, we're starting from square one. With me technically being a new member – particularly with singing – we're taking it like we're a new band and seeing where can go from there. At the same time, I'm so excited about the new material because we tend to get a lot of typical responses, the biggest being 'Evile's first album is their best… the rest is crap!' This record will appeal to those people; we're going back to a similar style of thrash, but *more*."

EVILE'S NEW RECORD IS DUE FOR RELEASE IN EARLY 2021 VIA NAPALM RECORDS

PRESS

Daughters of Darkness

Daughters of Darkness is a photographic collection of women wearing only corpse paint. A tribute to Black Metal and Doom album and merchandise artwork, *Daughters of Darkness* features hundreds of models from all over the world, as well as celebrities, actresses, and musicians—some under the anonymity of corpse paint—most of whom are dedicated fans of Black Metal and who even designed and applied their own corpse paint.

STANDARD EDITION

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEREMY SAFFER
FOREWORD BY DANI FILTH
INTRODUCTION BY D. RANDALL BLYTHE

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THE STORY BEHIND

CHOKE SEPULTURA

With Max Cavalera gone, Sepultura needed a new frontman and an anthem that'd take them forwards. Enter Derrick Green

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

UNLUCKY THIRTEEN. OVER 13 years Sepultura had grown from a ragtag group from the backwaters of Brazil into the first true global metal sensation. But January 1, 1997 marked the start of the most critical year in their history. Just two weeks previously the band played to a sold-out Brixton Academy; a landmark show that was later released by Roadrunner Records in 2002 as *Under A Pale Grey Sky* – one of metal's greatest live albums and the sound of a band very much at the top of their game. Unfortunately, it was also the sound of a band that had very much reached breaking point, founding member Max Cavalera vacating the vocalist spot after 11 years. An enormous question loomed: who could possibly bring the gravitas and presence a band like Sepultura so clearly demanded? A New York City bouncer, naturally.

Derrick Green was born in Cleveland, Ohio and had moved to New York after the disbandment of Outface, a melodic-hardcore band he joined in 1988 aged just 15. In New York, Derrick formed two similarly hardcore-flavoured bands – the short-lived Overfiend and Alpha Jerk. But Derrick's evenings were seldom spent in the city's many dive-bars and venues; instead he was outside, working the door at a bar across the street from his home. "I lived in the same building as Iggy Pop so I'd often see him," Derrick says. "He'd come into the bar regularly because he was friends with the owner. There were a lot of incredible people who'd come in for that reason; it wasn't uncommon to see Dee Dee Ramone or [director] Abel Ferrara just hanging out."

Around this time Sepultura had begun the recruitment process, creating a tape for new singers to demonstrate their prowess. It was an instrumental version of the song *Choke* – a song that would ultimately become the first single for the new Sepultura. The band wanted to see what prospective vocalists could bring to the table. "I actually knew other people who auditioned," Derrick says. "My neighbour Jorge [Rosado] of Merauder went down to Brazil and auditioned for them, but ended up coming back because things hadn't clicked. Before him, there was also Davide [Gentile] of the band Orange 9mm who auditioned in San Diego. He was a fanatical Sepultura fan and could even play some of the old songs, but ultimately he decided it was all a bit too overwhelming. Davide was a friend and he helped me prepare; together we made a demo in his studio."

ALTHOUGH LARGELY AN unknown at the time, Derrick's demo ultimately won out, even beating more established names like Testament's Chuck Billy and Phil Demmel of Vio-lence. "I didn't even know those guys had auditioned until *way* after I joined!" Derrick says. "I was just all about finding ways to represent myself, because I didn't want to just repeat what they'd done in the past. As luck would have it, that's what the band wanted too."

Invited to Brazil to try out for the band by drummer Iggor Cavalera, Derrick was on a plane within a week, having frantically learned about the continent by renting out as many books from the library as he could. "It was pre-internet!" he laughs. "Our first week there wasn't even about the music – it was about getting to know the guys. Going to a football game was the most intense experience – the sheer camaraderie with thousands of people who have this passion, so much that the concrete stadiums would shake with people stomping. You hear about these things all the time, but to experience it was totally different."

The following week the band got down to business, hitting the studio to properly try out Derrick in the band dynamic. "They played a few new songs and I had to just make up some things on the spot which was *horrible*" he groans. "I was so intimidated; I hadn't realised how massive the band were – people would recognise them on the street all the time. But I was hanging out with Paulo [Jr., Seps' bassist] and he said, 'This is your moment, you've got to come through.'"

While *Choke* is the song that got Derrick in the door for Sepultura, it was a cover of Bad Brains' *Gene Machine/ Don't Bother Me* [released as the B-side to *Choke*] that helped put everything in its right place. "That song got me closer to the band because it was something familiar," Derrick says. "Seeing Bad Brains live had changed my life and it was a band we all had in common. After that, everything started to flow."

A month after returning from Brazil, Derrick was officially invited to join the

THE FACTS

RELEASED: 1998

ALBUM: *Against*

PERSONNEL: Derrick Green (vocals), Andreas Kisser (guitar), Paulo Jr. (bass), Iggor Cavalera (drums)

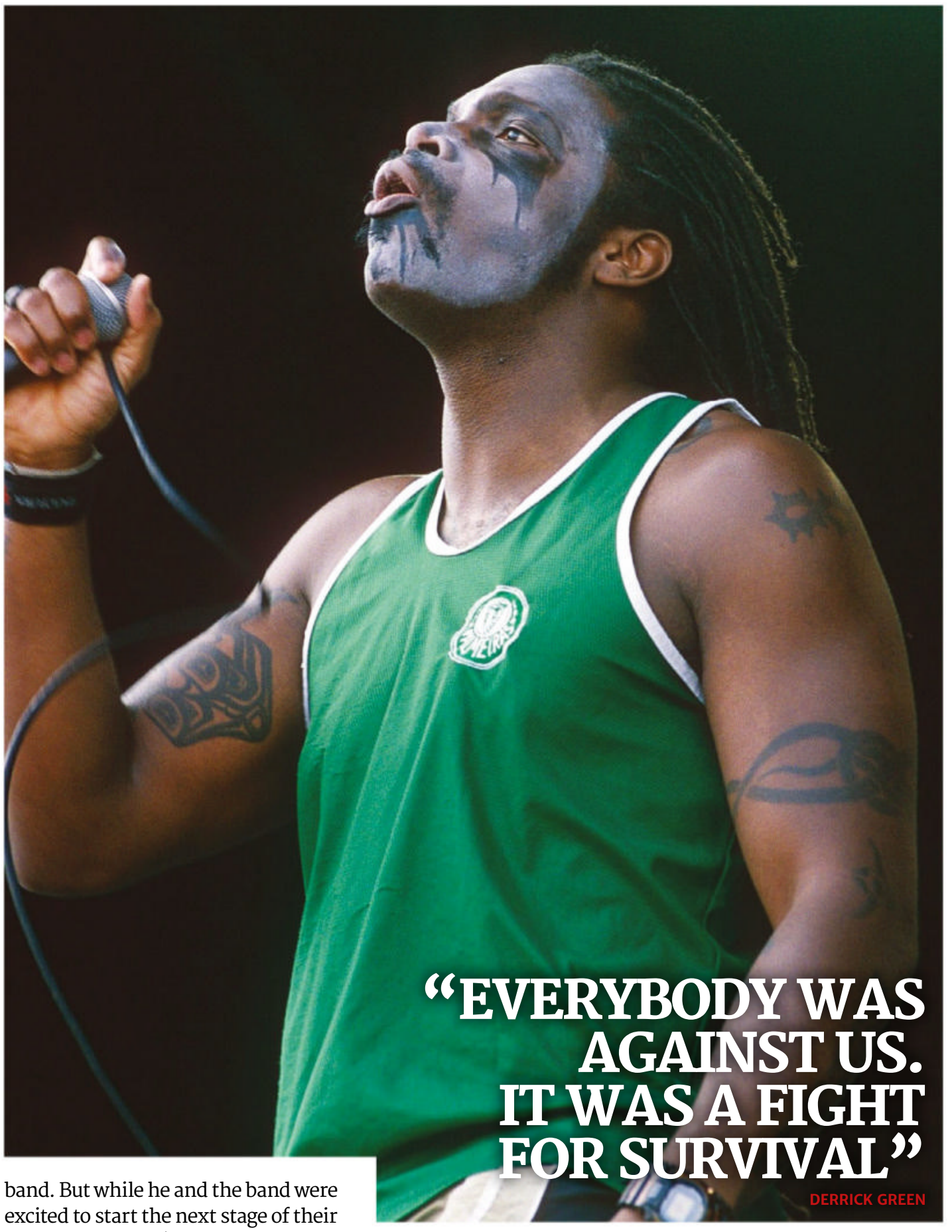
HIGHEST CHART POSITION: 91 (UK)

MICK HUDSON/GETTY

Sepultura (left to right):
Andreas Kisser, Paulo Jr.,
Iggor Cavalera, Derrick Green

“I LIVED IN THE SAME BUILDING AS IGGY POP”

DERRICK GREEN



“EVERYBODY WAS AGAINST US. IT WAS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL”

DERRICK GREEN

band. But while he and the band were excited to start the next stage of their lives, some weren’t so invested in the band’s continued existence. “It was a strange time,” he says with a sigh. “We didn’t have a manager and the base of the band had fallen out with the split. We ended up going with Todd Singerman who managed Motörhead. He helped tremendously, because there were a lot of people who turned their backs and decided we were done. I didn’t understand; we had a deal for three more records, so I couldn’t figure why they didn’t want to support us and keep things going. Some of the people there had wanted somebody who looked like the old singer, sounded like him – like it was too much work to try and promote something different to what the band had been.”

Faced with apathy and even hostility from some sectors, the title of the band’s next record made perfect sense. “The record title was *Against* because it felt like everybody *was* against us – it was a fight for survival,” Derrick says. “Luckily we had some people in our corner that still supported us and we could do cool things like pulling in [Japanese Taiko drumming group] Kodo for pieces on *Kamaitachi* while I was still doing vocals.”

Derrick had some massive shoes to fill, but fill them he did

One of these ‘cool things’ also came about while the band were recording in LA. “Jason Newsted was a huge fan of the band, so he suggested coming to his house to write a song,” Derrick marvels. “He reasoned it would give us a chance to get all the negativity out and that song became *Hatred Aside*. It was great to find this positivity against the anger and he was especially sympathetic with me – he really understood what it meant to be the new guy in the band.”

IF 1997 HAD been make-or-break for the band, 1998 was a chance for a second coming. An intensive promo-tour introduced the world to Derrick Green and in July he made his live debut at a few ‘secret’ shows (billed under ‘Troops Of Doom’) at the House of Blues in Hollywood, Club 369 in Fullerton and Brick by Brick in San Diego. “Those shows were to test the waters, but they went great,” Derrick says. “We had a lot of friends come out to support us, but even so everybody was real nervous because this was a whole new world.”

But the true test was the line-up’s ‘official’ debut back in Brazil. “Even before I joined the band, they were preparing for the show in São Paulo,” Derrick explains. “It was the big one, called ‘Barulho contra Fome’ (Noise Against Hunger). We played to over 30,000 people and had special guests like Mike Patton, Jason Newstead and Carlinhos Brown – the guy who had helped write *Ratamahatta*. It was a real moment for me – I’d been working my whole life to play shows like this.”

Against was released on October 6, 1998, with *Choke* itself released as the lead single on November 28. While the video (filmed at the São Paulo show) showed the band as imperious and world-beating as ever, a lack of promotion ultimately stalled the band’s return and blighted their momentum for years to come. Landing at #91 on the UK charts, it was the last Sepultura song to chart in the UK, but still represents a vital part of the band’s rebirth. “Ironically, *Choke* was the song that gave Sepultura a fresh breath of life,” Derrick says.

“Every time we play it, it brings back memories of joining the band and doing that demo. It’s a beautiful feeling to still be doing this now and know people hear the song and go, ‘I love this one!’ and singing along – a big change from those first years! I remember touring with Slayer and System Of A Down when it had just come out and the fans would be going wild for the old stuff, then cross their arms whenever a new song came on. Still, we had it better than System – those guys were on their first album and the fans would just be like ‘THESE GUYS WEAR MAKE-UP! BOOOOOOO!’ But difficult as it seemed at the time, I think we made good choices. We continued with what we believed and weren’t swayed by those negative outside forces.” MH

QUADRA IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST. SEPULTURA PLAY DOWNLOAD NEXT JUNE

BRIAN RASIC/GETTY

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YOUR SHOUT

STEEL PANTHER ARE COPYING EMPEROR

...plus more spicy takes, curious musings and outrageous thoughts that you guys felt compelled to share with us this month

Steel Panther: hair metal to black metal and back again?

LONG LIVE THE PRINCE

Ozzy just needs to sit back now; although he said he lives for performing, he can't do what he used to and it really does show. I think he's an idol but he really needs to stop.
Tom Clift (Facebook)

Well, he's certainly been able to rest up this year, even if it's hardly through his (or anyone's) choice, so let's see what happens in 2021. If Ozzy feels he can still go, who are we to try and stop him?

METALLICA MILITIA

Metallica are one of the biggest bands in the world. Ignore the haters; they are still outstanding live and pack out stadiums and arenas worldwide. The gig at Man City last year was awesome.
David Jenons (Facebook)

We had the lads on the cover a couple of issues back, so rest assured: we are indeed still all-in on Metallica. Judging by *Hardwired... To Self-Destruct*, we reckon they still have some world-class music left in them, too. Bring it on.

BACK IN BLACK (SPANDEX)

Steel Panther: from bright and colourful hair metal to dark and scary black metal. One minute you were trying to be Poison and Mötley Crüe, next you are copying the Emperor and Mercyful Fate looks?
Chen Jackson (Facebook)

We're pretty sure that was a one-off for the *Let's Get High Tonight* video. At least we hope it was. We don't think black metal would tolerate Steel Panther coming for it like that again...

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999

Concerts in the 90s were killer because they'd have all different styles of bands playing together. The Warped Tour, Smokeout Festival, Lollapalooza, etc...all great festivals, all styles of music!
Sergio Munoz (Facebook)

We're always down for a bit of variety. Dua Lipa at Download 2022, yeah? OK maybe not quite that far (although, we have to say that Dua album is actually pretty good. What?)

SLUMBER PARTY

Yes *Metal Hammer* for giving Oceans Of Slumber some love! Cammie is the best voice in metal today and we need more like her in the metal scene in 2020! Keep it up, please.
Tanya Seaman (email)

We're happy to help! Especially when it's a band as kickass as Oceans Of Slumber.

NOT DOWN WITH THIS SORT OF THING

System Of A Down really need to drop John. Whatever your politics, having a guy with those views in a band that has always stood for the exact opposite makes the whole outfit look fucking dumb. It's bad enough that we're never gonna get a new album – now we know that at least one member is sat there playing songs he completely disagrees with! Stupid.
Steve Jennings (Facebook)

Yeah, it's hard work hearing John come out with that stuff sometimes, especially when you know what System are all about. Quite how they manage to all make it on a stage together, we'll never know (we'd still take a new album though, if they happen to be reading this...)

SPOOKY SEASON

Not really metal-related, but can you please tell your readers to keep wearing masks so we might still get Halloween? It's the only thing that can save 2020! Come on, *Metal Hammer*!
Danni Harding (email)

Yes, yes we can: READERS, WE KNOW YOU'RE ALL GOOD EGGS, SO

#TWEETS

Never understood the love for *Killers* tbh. Few good songs, but nowhere near as good as debut or the following 5 albums. Would argue *No Prayer...* and *Fear Of The Dark* are on a par if not better.
@wilson_r

My friend messaged me last week saying he'd "found a new cool band called Nailbomb". I said "You mean the one I had the t-shirt of back in the 90s?" "Oh fuck," he says.
@danbrowning_uk

If 'female-fronted metal' is supposed to be a genre, why not go all the way and just call it 'female-fronted music' and lump in No Doubt, Billie Eilish and Shakira with Once Human, Ladybaby and Asagraum?
@arzi42

Faith? Dance Macabre? Don't care what anyone says, Ghost are the dog's balls.
@podge1971

Prong. The most underrated band ever. Tommy Victor is freakin awesome!
@atheistcane

Ozzy: taking it easy

KEEP IT UP WITH THE MASKS SO WE CAN MAYBE ALL WEAR MASKS LATER THIS MONTH, ALRIGHT?

BRING ME THE POP MUSIC?

Nothing Bring Me The Horizon have released in the last decade is even close to being metal, so I doubt I'd be interested in what influenced the 'music' they make now. To each their own, though: obviously they have enough of a fanbase to keep making the pop music they have been creating.
Jason Taylor (Facebook)

We reckon calling a song like *Obey* 'pop' is a bit of a stretch, but they've certainly sailed into different waters in recent years. Will BMTH ever make a truly heavy album again? We will just have to wait and see...

THIS IS WAR

I wanted to say thank you for posting the Wargasm/NXT UK article so I could discover this band. They're really incredible, one of the best acts I've heard in while. Keep on, guys!
Nick Belyaev (Facebook)

You are most welcome. Wargasm rule, and we were stoked to have them in New Noise last month. Don't sleep on this band.

THE BIG DEBATE

Last month *Classic Rock*'s Polly Glass lamented the loss of music festivals this year – although argued that us Brits are pretty much sadists for loving them so much in the first place

SHE SAID

"Doesn't it say something about the transportive power of live music, if we're willing to put up with apocalyptic rainfall, omnipresent mud and freely urinating strangers for a prolonged dose of it? Nay, if we actually obtain real *pleasure* from said live music *because* of said conditions?"

YOU SAID

I really missed going to Download this year. Can't wait for next year, already got my ticket.
Roger Williams (Facebook)

Ahhh there's nothing like a several thousand acre pit of body odour.
Micah Sisson (Facebook)

Getting stuck into the mud and sweat and warm beer is half of what it's all about though, isn't it? I'll never complain about rain at a festival again after this year, I swear!
Danny Carr (Facebook)

Those big festivals have gotten too big and expensive. Always just a few bands you want to see and then they play at the same time on different stages. I miss shows at clubs more.
Patrik Wikstrom (Facebook)

I think this all shows we shouldn't take festivals and gigs for granted – I wouldn't be surprised if some of the smaller festivals don't come back after this.
Jade Bull (Facebook)

JOIN THE BIG DEBATE AT FACEBOOK.COM/METALHAMMERREADERS

HAMMER STEREO

What's been blowing our office speakers

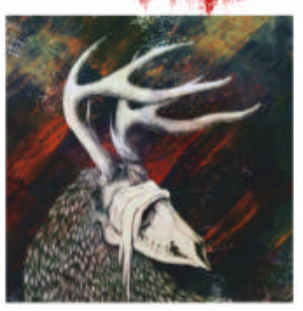
PALLBEARER
Forgotten Days
"Doom is truly Eternal"
MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR

THE OCEAN
Phanerozoic II: Mesozoic / Cenozoic
"So expansive and brilliant, there's a fossil named after them"
ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR

MOLASSESS
Through The Hollow
"One of the most moving and mystical albums you'll hear this year"
JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR

DEFTONES
Ohms
"They just can't make a bad album, can they? Awesome stuff!"
VANESSA THORPE
PRODUCTION EDITOR

DEFTONES
Ohms
"Deftones strike again!"
LOUISE BROCK
ART EDITOR



SVALBARD
When I Die, Will I Get Better?
"The most important British metal record of 2020"
DAVE EVERLEY
ACTING ONLINE EDITOR

PANTHER: ASHLEY MAILE/PRESS

NEW NOISE

TALLAH

Twenty years after its heyday, nu metal is rearing its head in the sound of a new generation of bands – and Tallah are taking it to wild new limits

WORDS: YASMINE SUMMAN

NU METAL'S HEYDAY seems like a fragmented memory. After its decline through the mid-2000s in the wake of third-wave emo and the metalcore boom, the genre's growth became stagnant, save a few massive names who clawed their way out of the pit in time. Two decades down the line and 'nu core' is breathing new life into the genre – just with less of the baggy pants and liberal use of hair gel. That's where we find Pennsylvania's Tallah, who are taking nu core by the helm in an effort to "make metal disturbing again", in the words of vocalist Justin Bonitz.

"When you look at what happened back in the 70s, 80s and 90s compared to what's going on now, metal definitely used to be a lot more twisted, edgy and frickin' crazy," he says. "We want you to feel uncomfortable. If you've ever seen *The Fly* with Jeff Goldblum, that's the same way I want people to feel when they listen to our music. I don't want them to be scared; I want them to be so disturbed that they feel depressed, like, 'Oh, I need a shower…'"

Nu core, as the name suggests, is the lovechild of nu metal and hardcore. Justin cites the band's influences as Slipknot, Linkin Park, Korn and System Of A Down, but also Code Orange, From Fire Of The Gods and Knocked Loose. He even argues that late 2010s emo rap and trap metal have helped "bridge the gap" for the next cycle of nu metal, because "all of a sudden you've got all these people who want rap in their metal, or screaming in their rap, and then it's just like, 'Boom! Nu metal!'"

The four-piece formed in 2018 when drummer Max (son of Mike) Portnoy found Justin from his acclaimed YouTube career as Hungry Lights. Justin had amassed more than two million views on his 'How To Scream (10 Different Techniques)' video, even if it taught him the perils of being an 'internet personality'.

"The biggest thing that I learned [from YouTube] is probably when *not* to say anything," says Justin. "Everybody has an opinion and is an elitist. There is no respect online. It's weird being that accessible because, in a way, it breeds disrespect."

NU METAL'S RETURN is being met with an unexpectedly warm welcome. Even in its prime years, the genre was often labelled as metal's cringy younger brother, so its sudden rebirth and admiration amongst younger musicians might come as a shock. Justin, however, argues that nu metal is one of the more sustainable genres because "it's just got a little bit of everything." He says, "You've got your groovy riffs, your screaming, but then you've also got a little bit of rap and these catchy choruses. It's [also] something that non-metal people can still enjoy listening to."

Nu metal's reception might also wash down differently now it's become widely accessible – and easier to make than ever. "I think that it's definitely going to be very, very different this time around," says the vocalist. "It's not just streaming [giving people access to the music]. You have artists who can write, record and engineer their own stuff from their house. Back in the day, you *had* to go on Myspace or you *had* to go on LimeWire or Pirate Bay or something like that. It was like, 'These are the exclusive places if you want to get free music.' But now, *artists* put their stuff out there for free for you to come to find them."

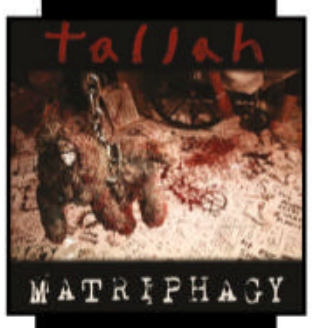
Tallah strive to be as off-the-wall as possible – and we mean that literally.

IN SHORT:

SOUNDS LIKE: A homage to 00s nu metal but with an unnerving hardcore energy

FOR FANS OF: Linkin Park, Slipknot, Korn

LISTEN TO: *Overconfidence*



Tallah: the missing link between nu metal's past and its bright future

CODY KACZYNSKI/PRESS

Justin was arrested at one of his own shows last year for climbing on venue equipment and fighting security.

"That is the first time that that has ever happened," he chuckles. "We didn't really know what was going on. We always climb on stuff and we've never gotten in trouble for it; that's just what we did ever since the beginning. We assume that when a venue books us they know what they're getting in for."

It's all nothing too out of the ordinary for a Tallah show; relocating a busted shoulder mid-set, dodging pit warriors with karate moves or, erm, dressing up as a businessman and selling pitches between songs is just scratching the surface of some of the things that have been seen at their gigs.

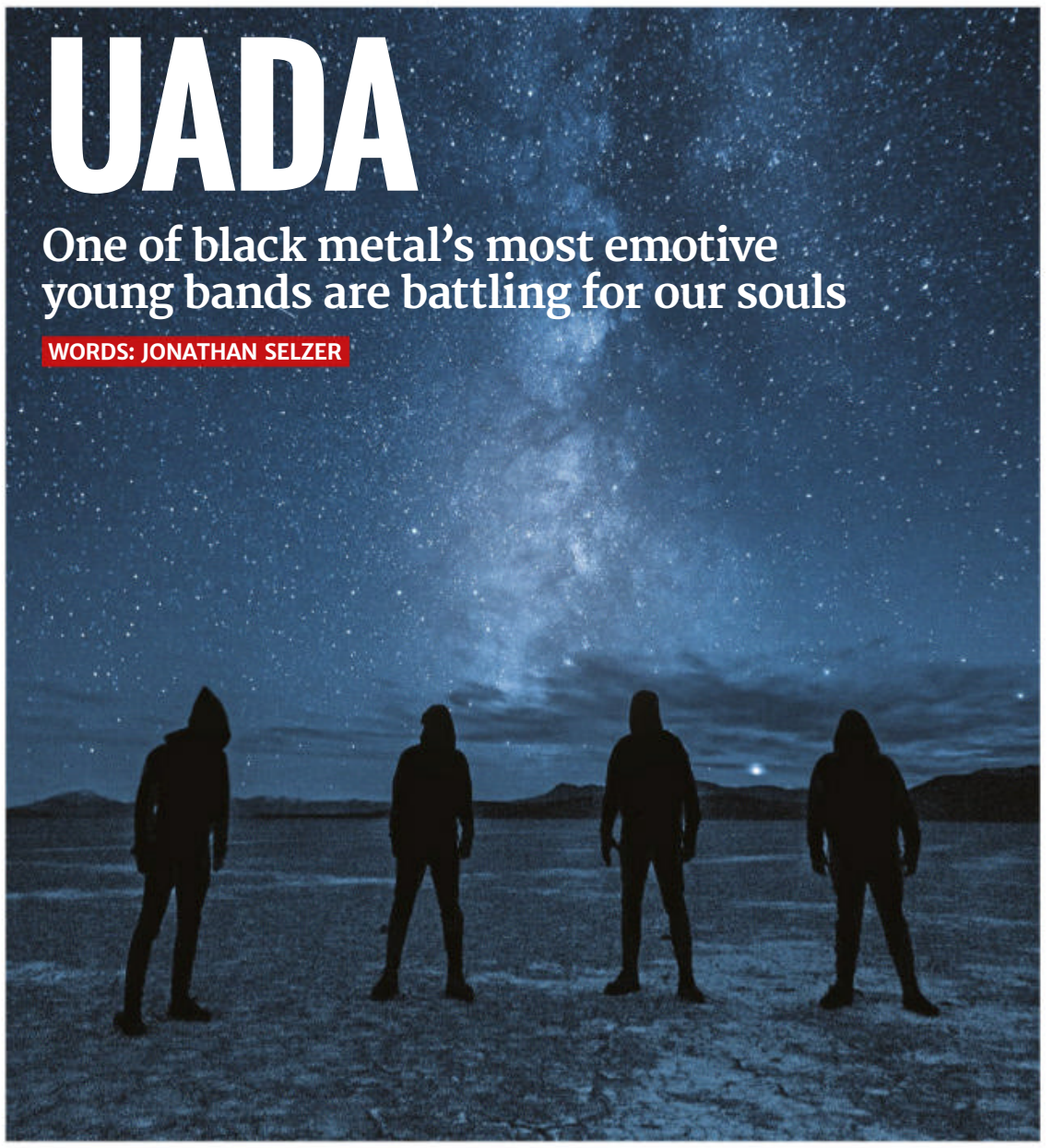
"I think more metal bands need to be unafraid to push boundaries," Justin admits. "I'd like to see more people putting on a full show and not just getting onstage and playing in jeans; when we first started, I went out there and was performing in a French maid outfit! Max was specifically looking for members who are not afraid to go nuts, get hurt, get hit in the face with somebody else's guitar, fall off a stage, get arrested… he sought people who are going to take it to the next level and not just stand there and play music."

"METAL USED TO BE TWISTED, EDGY AND CRAZY"

Like the very best nu metal bands that came before them, Tallah reject any sign of normality.

***MATRIPHAGY* IS OUT NOW VIA EARACHE**

NEW NOISE



UADA

One of black metal's most emotive young bands are battling for our souls

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER

IN THE FOUR years since their *Devoid Of Light* debut, Portland's Uada have become one of the most charged lightning rods on the black metal landscape. Some have dismissed them as scene hijackers, while others have found themselves stunned by the emotive, questing nature of their live shows and first two albums, tapping into a wellspring of twilit melody that's elevated them to the point where they can see beyond black metal's traditional borders to the fertile realms just beyond.

Uada's latest album, *Djinn*, makes it clear the four-piece are on a mission that's impervious to the storm raging around them. More crystalline in tone than its 2018 predecessor, *Cult Of A Dying Sun*, it's both an expanding of musical horizons and, as vocalist/guitarist Jake Superchi explains, a binding of their career so far into a thematic whole.

"The albums are very much in relation to the timeline we are living through," he says. "When writing *Devoid Of Light*, I was coming out of what felt like the death of another project, and so the theme of transition played a huge role. Writing *Cult Of A Dying Sun*, I was looking back on my past and reflection was the theme for that album. This leads us to *Djinn*, which tackles the theme of possession. We can see how much of our lives are becoming possessed by our music and how everything tied to it eventually takes its toll. It's also this album that we imagined would truly consume us and our world once it was released."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE: Surging, soul-searching BM with groove and lead breaks galore

FOR FANS OF: Schammasch, Watain, Mord'A'Stigmata

LISTEN TO: *Between Two Worlds*

If there's an auto-biographical undertow to Uada's music, that's not to say it doesn't strive for something more far-reaching. The lyrics to the track *No Place Here* may suggest the kind of social and struggle for which his city has become a flashpoint, but for Jake, the battle on the streets is a battle for the soul.

"The lyrics are a take on the constant battle in humanity: the duality of good and evil, red and blue, left and right. A good start would be to change our outward wars inward. Any change has to be first made within – it's the only thing that makes sense to me."

***DJINN* IS OUT NOW VIA EISENWALD**

FROZEN CROWN

Milan's premier new power metallers are making serious waves

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

HAILING FROM MILAN and packing a full-on mix of power metal histrionics and symphonic pomp, Frozen Crown look set to be Italy's next breakout metal band. Originally conceived by Be The Wolf guitarist Federico Mondelli as a side-project, Frozen Crown soon took on a life of its own; the quintet rack up millions of streams and video views, despite having only been on the scene for three years.

"The 'vision' for the band was old-school heavy/power metal, with just a couple of orchestrations – but not to be considered 'symphonic metal'," the guitarist explains. 2019's *Crowned In Frost* further dialled back the symphonic elements, fine-tuning the band into a full-on heavy metal powerhouse, flown along by the tones of lead vocalist Giada Etro.

"I'd been playing in a gothic metal band," she explains of her involvement. "I auditioned [for Frozen Crown] with many other singers; Federico later said I was chosen because my style was a little unconventional compared to the other singers he got in touch with."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE: Power metal fit to scale the Misty Mountains to

FOR FANS OF: Dragonforce, Helloween, Stratovarius

LISTEN TO: *Neverending*

Luckily, 2020 wasn't quite as disruptive to Frozen Crown as most; they just managed to finish off a European tour with Dragonforce in February before the world went to plop. It's meant they have spent this year prepping for album number three – something they don't feel the need to rush, pandemic or otherwise.

"The third album is always a huge challenge and an important landmark in a band's career," muses Federico. "We're extremely stoked to show people what we've got!"

***CROWNED IN FROST* IS OUT NOW VIA SCARLET**

KILL THE LIGHTS

AKA what Moose from Bullet For My Valentine and his mates did next

WORDS: PARIS FAWCETT

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Veterans of 00s metalcore going full-on shred worship

FOR FANS OF:
Bleed From Within, Killswitch Engage, Bullet For My Valentine

LISTEN TO:
Plagues

GOING FROM DRUMMING in one of the UK's biggest metal bands to playing stages so small they barely fit his kit is one hell of a shift for Michael 'Moose' Thomas. However, it also provides the ex-Bullet For My Valentine drummer with the challenge he's after: "I wanted to start this from nothing and build it through to as big as we can possibly get!" he explains.

A metalcore supergroup of sorts with members of Throw The Fight, Still Remains and Threat Signal, Kill The Lights acts like a 'best of' all four of its counterparts: full of massive choruses, a storm of fun riffs and loads of trad metal influence running through the guitar lines and vocals. They're built to appeal to a mainstream metal audience of all ages, attempting to incorporate as much Maiden as they do In Flames.

Like many of their contemporaries, the lyrics of Kill The Lights carry a lot of personal weight, with vocalist James Clark striving to write with honesty. "[James] suffers big time with depression and deals with a lot of anxiety," explains Moose. "He survived cancer as well, so he touches on all bases and felt it relevant to write about these things to try and help others."

If Kill The Lights sound up your alley, the good news is they're here to stay. "We're all in this for the long run, this is everyone's main project now," confirms Moose. He helped grow one metal heavyweight from the ground up, what's another? MH

***THE SINNER* IS OUT NOW VIA FEARLESS. KILL THE LIGHTS HIT THE UK IN MARCH**

FIT FOR A KING

Want metal to motivate you? These lads have it in spades

WORDS: MATT MILLS

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Metalcore anthems so triumphant you'll feel able to tear down a brick wall

FOR FANS OF:
Miss May I, Asking Alexandria, Acres

LISTEN TO:
The Path

ON NEW ALBUM *The Path*, the hyper-melodic Fit For A King peddle victorious metalcore. Its 10 songs all straddle the line between that genre and more extreme tendencies, resulting in anthems with giant choruses, destructive breakdowns and gritty riffs – it's pure, motivating energy.

"I grew up listening to Whitechapel, Brain Drill and Necrophagist," says frontman Ryan Kirby. "I've always been a fan of deathcore breakdowns. I think that's what differentiates us from bands like Killswitch: when we go heavy, we go *all* the way in!"

The Path's invigorating soundscape stands in stark contrast to Fit For A King's earlier material, especially prior albums *Deathgrip* and *Dark Skies*. The latter catapulted the band into opening for enviably huge European tours, despite dealing with some heavy matter.

"The last couple of records have been depressing," Ryan admits. "I got into a better place in life during the *Dark Skies* cycle. When we hit the studio for this record, I was just feeling really good. I hadn't felt that positive in a long time – not just about music, but about life!" MH

***THE PATH* IS OUT NOW VIA SOLID STATE**

IN THE KNOW

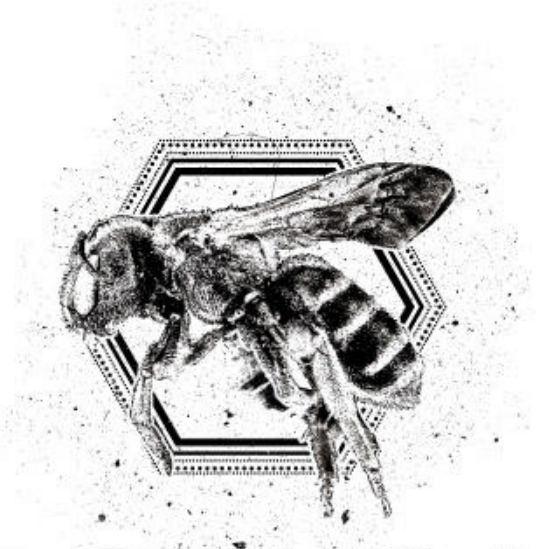
What your favourite bands are listening to

GOLDEN CORE

"GOLDEN CORE!
I am very excited to see where this power duo can go. Proggy doom with some Old Norse concepts and Icelandic lyrics. They started back in 2014 and are still very young guys. This is doom for the people!"

IVAR BJØRNSON, ENSLAVED

GOLDEN CORE: STORM DRABITIUS/PRESS. IVAR: ROY BJØRGE/PRESS



HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month

MOTÖRHEAD

ACE OF SPADES - SUPER DELUXE BOX SET

BMG

£250

MOTÖRHEAD'S ICONIC AND catalytic fifth album is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, and the top end box set has been stuffed so thoroughly with suitable plunder you could barely imagine what else a 50th anniversary would bring. Housed in its stunning carved wooden box, you'll find four 12-inch vinyls containing *Ace Of Spades* itself, two double live albums, another double album of b-sides, rarities and outtakes, a 10-inch disc of previously unreleased instrumental tracks and a repro of the Dutch *Ace Of Spades* seven-inch. There's a host more too – a DVD featuring TV and live appearances, plus a 5.1 audio version of the album, an in-depth 40 page book telling its backstory, tour programme, comic, poker dice and gameboard, playing card, poker mat, casino chips and shot glasses. Pricey, but it'll be the best gamble you've ever made.

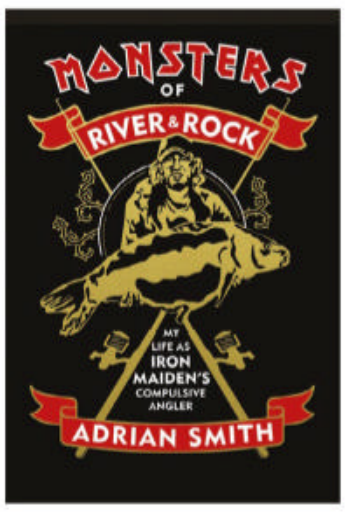
https://tinyurl.com/spades-deluxe

KING DIAMOND SNEAKERS

£46.99

You probably never thought you needed King Diamond shoes, but what on earth are you going to wear on your feet as you scream "GRANDMAAAA!" through a rickety haunted house? These. You're going to wear these.

http://tinyurl.com/diamond-sneakers



MONSTERS OF RIVER & ROCK

£20

Mixing tales of his four decades in one of the world's biggest bands with a lifetime's passion for fishing, Iron Maiden guitarist Adrian Smith combines power chords and pastoralism for a different, yet fascinating kind of biography.

https://tinyurl.com/maiden-fish

SLIPKNOT NECK GAITERS

£25.00

With the weather getting grimmer what better way to warm your jowls, cover your gob and scare the bejesus out of your fellow bus passengers than with one (or nine!) of these Slipknot-approved neck gaiters?

https://store.digitalstores.co.uk/slipknot/

CROBAR JACKET

£85.00

It's a sign of our shitty times that London's infamous drinking den, The Crobar, has shut its doors, but all is not lost! Help fund its resurrection, and get a souvenir to boot, with this Varsity jacket, or a host of other goodies.

https://crobar.merchdirect.co.uk

HAMMER BOTTLE OPENER

£13.99

How could we at *Metal Hammer* fail to appreciate an actual *metal hammer* that unlocks your beer? Raise this mini Mjölnir high and bring it down atop your chosen brew for the ultimate hero's libation…

https://tinyurl.com/mjolnir-mybeer

JURASSIC PARK SHOT GLASSES

£13.99

Life finds a way, but the drunkard searching for the off-licence at one in the morning doesn't. Get shit-faced at home instead, stick on *Jurassic Park* and drink every time Jeff Goldblum says something charming.

https://tinyurl.com/jurassic-shot

METALLICA SMARTSHAKE

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SHORTEST STRAW HAS (NOT) BEEN PULLED FOR YOU with this classy Smartshake – etched with Metallica's *…And Justice for All* artwork, you can sup succulent berry water safe in the knowledge it's BPA and DEHP-free.

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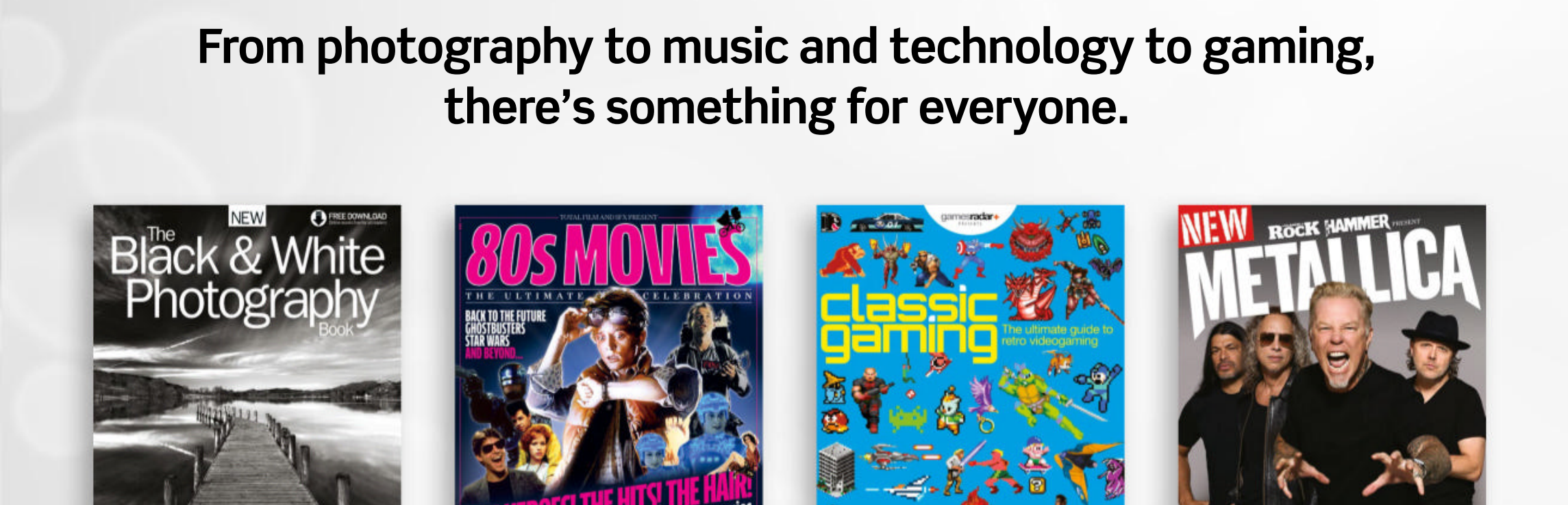

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JUDAS PRIEST ARE 50

…and somehow, inexplicably, they're still as determined to defend the faith as ever. We take a look back over the incredible career of the most metal band of them all – and find out what comes next

WORDS: JOE DALY • PICTURES: TRAVIS SHINN

JUDAS PRIEST

K.K Downing (second from left) played with Priest from 1970-2011

The afternoon has hardly begun and the US National Weather Service has already issued an 'Excessive Heat Warning' for the greater Phoenix area. As the thermostat approaches 45°C, news outlets caution locals to remain indoors or risk terminal heat stroke. It's quite metal, actually, and it's where we find Rob Halford today, comfortably ensconced in his air-conditioned home. The legendary Judas Priest vocalist and long-time Phoenix resident turned 69 yesterday and he is still basking in the online birthday wishes. "It's just absolutely overwhelming emotionally to see so much love coming back from every possible place," he tells *Metal Hammer*, "particularly on social media, like Instagram and Facebook. I spent quite a bit of time yesterday reading the beautiful comments and things that people were saying about Priest and the metal we make."

In its wild and colourful history, metal culture has suffered no shortage of legends, but only Rob Halford is known as the Metal God. Exceedingly friendly, he calls us by our first name throughout the interview and shares his insights with a thoughtful intensity. Rob's autobiography, *Confess*, will soon be released and Judas Priest are celebrating their 50th anniversary, putting him in a reflective mood. "It's a really powerful moment to read these beautiful comments," he says, "because it all pertains to the chat that we're going to have today about how metal is so immersed in the lives of so many metal maniacs around the world. Particularly, in this instance, with Judas Priest."

We are indeed here to talk about one of the most important bands in metal history and all that they have accomplished, inspired, overcome and conquered in over a half-century. But talking about Judas Priest's influence on heavy metal is like talking about the round part of a football. Metal, as we know it today, could hardly exist in any recognisable form without the steely-eyed quintet who emerged from the Midlands at the dawn of the 70s. Originally formed in 1969, Priest experienced a spate of line-up changes before congealing in 1973 around the core of Rob on vocals, guitarist Ken 'K.K.' Downing and bassist Ian Hill. In 1974, at the suggestion of their then-label, a virtuosic young shredder named Glenn Tipton joined the band as a second guitarist. Several different men would helm the Judas Priest drum stool for the first two decades, until the mighty Scott Travis ascended the throne in 1989.

Checking in from his home in the UK, Glenn remembers seeing Judas Priest for the first time. "Seeing the band and hearing Rob's vocal abilities… it was truly magical," he says. "He has such a distinct voice. I had great belief in both the band and Rob."

If Rob Halford is the Metal God, then Glenn Tipton is Priest's Lord of the Metal Riff. Any talented, hardworking guitarist might be chuffed to be known for writing one or two memorable riffs, but through the decades Glenn has composed literally scores of world-famous, stadium-shaking bangers. In 2018, Glenn stepped away from touring duties after disclosing a diagnosis of later-stage Parkinson's disease. Passionate and completely unguarded, Glenn tells us that despite his health challenges, he's hanging tough. "I have good days and bad days," he says, "so I just get on with it. I'm very positive some days, but others quite negative, so I just try and make every day count and enjoy myself."

> **"I HAVE GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS"**
> GLENN TIPTON

In their earliest years, through their 1974 debut, *Rocka Rolla*, Priest aligned more with the prog rock and electric blues outfits of the day – bands like Cream, the Yardbirds, Hendrix and early Zeppelin. In these styles, they saw possibilities as yet unexplored and they seized the moment. "We've always felt that Judas Priest was born at the right time," Rob says. "We had this wonderful opportunity to be inspired by such incredible musicians and to make something unique together in those early stages."

Aside from some superficial commonalities, Judas Priest really sound like *none* of those early bands, even including Black Sabbath. Behind hard-driving tempos, and the fiercely affecting spectacle of two metal shredders and a frontman who seemed to channel his vocals from the very heavens above, they knew they had

PRESS

conjured something both darkly powerful and hopelessly catchy. It was Judas Priest who first alchemised those early influences into a punishing new style of music that the world would soon recognise as a new strain of heavy metal. They hit the road as soon as possible. "We were laying the groundwork with all of those countless trips up and down the British motorways and across the ferries to Europe before we ever set foot in America," says Rob.

Back in the UK, bassist Ian Hill takes a break from tinkering around on his Bentley to chat. Ian laughs loudly and often and stresses that in those early days, nothing came easy. "It was hard work, you know? Some of the days we'd go to Norway in February! You'd put your gear in the back of the van and you'd put your mattresses on top of the gear and you'd sleep on that. Sometimes we weren't even sure we had the petrol money to get home. Ha ha ha! It was all so exciting, it really was. We loved every minute of it."

Today most bands release a new album every few years. Now consider that, beginning with *Rocka Rolla*, Priest released 12 full-length albums in 16 years. "I don't know how we did it," Rob says, "it's mad! We'd be on the road for a year, take a week's break and go back in the studio and make another album."

"On albums back when we first started," Ian explains, "I think we had a total of 24 tracks, so they didn't take a great deal of time."

Steadily and progressively, Judas Priest evolved their sound from *Sad Wings Of Destiny* (1976) to the 1980 masterpiece known as *British Steel*. Each album featured higher musicianship, ambition and attitude. Rob says, "I think the mindset for every Priest album is, 'What can we do that's different from the last record?'"

On *Sad Wings Of Destiny*, Judas Priest introduced the world to the fearsome spectacle of its double-fretted attack. Glenn and K.K. played at a dizzying pace, weaving deeply intricate melodies together, building towards climaxes so powerful as to render sold-out stadiums breathless, hoarse and begging for more. "The dual guitars are pretty unique," Glenn says. "There were bands like Wishbone Ash who had dual guitars, but we had two *heavy metal* guitarists harmonising and producing an exciting stereo backdrop of sound." Glenn and K.K. had set a new standard for heavy music that would figure prominently in a few years, with the rise of Iron Maiden and the NWOBHM.

In 1980, behind the dramatic potency of tracks like *Breaking The Law*, *Living After Midnight* and *Rapid Fire*, the masterpiece known as *British Steel* broke Priest in the US, where they entered the Top 40 and never looked back. "We wrote and recorded *British Steel* in about four weeks," Glenn recalls. "We wrote half of it in the studio; some great songs like *The Rage*, that just came naturally to us. Sometimes the best things come when you do them quickly..."

Rob adds, "I think we started to get really excited about where we were at by the time that we released the *British Steel* album. That was a tipping point for us, to some extent."

If *British Steel* established them as the pre-eminent metal band of their generation, their release two years later would catapult them into the mainstream. "The first time we got very successful was probably *Screaming For Vengeance*," Ian says, "when AM radio picked up on *You've Got Another Thing Coming*. That made us an 'overnight success', ha ha ha! We were on a long, steady climb until that point and then we sort of took off there."

Fast-forward to the present and they've sold more than 50 million albums, toured Planet Earth countless times, released 18 full-lengths and scored a Grammy; but to a man, they insist that they've never rested on these laurels. "Because of who we are and where we're from," Rob says, "we never looked each other in the eye and gave two thumbs up and said we've made it."

Glenn agrees, saying, "I suppose that we never really accepted the accolade of how big we'd become. We've always kept our feet on the ground and we just give the best show we can every time we take the stage."

At the same time, they are all keenly aware of the towering scale of their legacy. Says Rob, "There is no other band like Priest, and I don't say that from a pedestal. It's a fact."

There have been offstage moments that have played a prominent role in the band's history. From a very young age, Rob had known and accepted that he was gay, but until coming out in 1998, his

Richie Faulkner: Priest's wunderkind

sexuality was never publicised. Within the band however, it was never an issue. Ian explains: "He was Rob. It wouldn't have mattered if he was gay or straight or whatever. It didn't change anything."

"My main focus was my band, Judas Priest and heavy metal," adds Rob. "But in the early days, [my sexuality] was tucked away deeply in the closet and those few that did know kept it as quiet as I did."

In 1985, two young Nevada men carried out a suicide pact after a day of reportedly drinking, smoking marijuana and listening to Judas Priest albums. Their families sued the band, claiming that Judas Priest had encouraged fans to take their own lives by inserting secret backwards messages on *Stained Glass*, like "Let's be dead" and "Do it." The band had, of course, done no such thing and the case was dismissed, but not before Judas Priest were dragged through a gauntlet of vilification in the American media. Ian recalls, "We never expected it to go to court. But within a week I think the judge realised he'd made a terrible mistake by letting it get into court to start with."

Revitalised and renewed, the band entered the 90s with *Painkiller*, a marauding siege of modern metal that pumped the full-throttle aggression of thrash into their trademark sound. It was not simply one of their finest moments; it was a statement. "Out of all of the albums that we've made, that one had a definite kind of agenda, if that's the right word," explains Rob. "We wanted it to be relentless, which is what that record is, from the first track to the last."

Painkiller featured the debut of drummer Scott Travis, whose punishing double-kick assault and hyperkinetic volleys propelled Priest into a new era. "That was a revelation when he came along," says Ian. "[The previous drummer,] Dave Holland was a great technical drummer but he couldn't handle the stuff that Scott does. No way, God bless him. Scott opened a whole new avenue for us, really."

Now 30 years into his tenure, Scott tells us, "I now understand the gravity of Judas Priest, which is a legendary band, and that only comes with time. It takes that much time to become, dare I say, a legendary band, because that's what Priest is. Sometimes I look at them like I'm not even in the band, like, 'Wow, that's Judas Priest! They're legendary!' Ha ha!"

Rob Halford: the Metal God, and you know it

"I WAS TUCKED AWAY DEEPLY IN THE CLOSET"

ROB HALFORD

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Born in Virginia, where we find him today, the chilled-out and amiable drummer is the only non-English member of the band – a detail that did not escape him when he joined. "Not only was I an American," he says, "but I was at least 10 years younger than them. It could have gone completely pear-shaped, as they say in the UK. There were no personality clashes – none of that. I guess there was a little bit of risk on their part but here we are, 30 years later."

Then in 1992, Rob stunned the global metal community by leaving the band to pursue new projects. Three years later, Priest recruited US vocalist Tim 'Ripper' Owens from a Judas Priest tribute band. They released two albums with Ripper – *Jugulator* and *Demolition* – before Rob returned in 2003. "Tim is a brilliant vocalist," says Ian. "He really is. But he wasn't Rob and I think that's the problem that everybody had with it – including Tim. When Rob said he wanted to come back and rejoin, Tim was all for it because he could see it."

Glenn looks back on the Ripper years "with fondness," saying, "Tim is a good lad. We had some great live tours and we had some fun together."'

Rob's 2003 return to the band led to a trio of studio campaigns – *Angel Of Retribution*, *Nostradamus* and *Redeemer Of Souls*. It was during this period, in 2011, that K.K. retired from Judas Priest, citing myriad grievances with the band and its management. British wunderkind Richie Faulkner was brought in as K.K.'s replacement and he's made an immediate impact on both the band's songwriting and their live show.

Richie is energetic, affable and possessed of a bone-dry British humour. In July, he and his partner Mariah welcomed their first child, their daughter Daisy Mae, which has kept him rather busy and exceedingly happy. Upon joining Priest, Richie felt the love straight away. "It was an immediate sense of inclusion and respect and family. I got an opportunity with one of the world's best

Ian Hill: from a mattress in the back of a van to a Bentley owner. Good going!

Godless: the guys with Tim 'Ripper' Owens, second from right

bands, in my opinion, so if they'd told me to turn up, play the parts and fuck off, I would have been fine. But they didn't. It was, 'What do you think?,' 'What's your opinion?', 'What would you do here?', 'How can we change this?' When they give you 1,000%, you give 10,000% back."

On 2018's *Firepower*, the band notched another high with their most consistent and catchiest batch of new material since *Painkiller*, again flaunting their ability to modernise while carrying forward that inimitable Priest DNA.

Despite years of globetrotting, according to Richie, Judas Priest remain close to their British roots. "We're all moany old women, to some degree! Ha ha ha," he laughs. "We are all stereotypically English. We like a dark pub with low ceilings and no light and shit food, do you know what I mean?"

Like Black Sabbath and a handful of other metal bands, Judas Priest have transcended their metal fame and claimed a spot in mainstream culture. There was of course, the movie *Rock Star*, a fictional tale loosely inspired by Rob's departure from the band, starring Mark Wahlberg in the Ripper role. They also made a well-known cameo on *The Simpsons*, but the quirkiest moment might well be the cult documentary *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, featuring literally a parking lot full of Judas Priest fans swilling beer and getting pumped for a Priest show. "I think *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* sums it up, really," says Glenn. "Some of our fans are animals and they love metal! We have really loyal fans!"

"The people like to live a little bit more on the wild side, if you know what I mean," says Ian. "Not the people you would generally find at Yale or Harvard. Ha ha ha!"

Fans will soon have a new reason to celebrate. The band report that even prior to the COVID lockdown, they had begun work on a new album. "We started the year prepping the next Judas Priest metal masterpiece," Rob says, "and we had one massive writing session together and we've got an enormous amount of material stacked up, which is really thrilling after the glorious response we had to *Firepower*."

"It's gonna be good," Scott says. "Rob's always excited about new music, which is great, because he's such a creative guy and when you are that creative, naturally you never rest on your laurels. You always want to do something new and get it out there."

"WE WEREN'T EVEN SURE WE HAD THE MONEY TO GET HOME"

IAN HILL

GETTY

Scott Travis: still coming to terms with the fact he's in a legendary band

Though delayed by COVID, the process remains the same. "We compile all our ideas and get together and throw them in the pot and see what sticks," explains Richie, "then see what lights up the room, see what Rob grabs hold of; it might be a riff that Rob really gets his teeth into that inspires a lyric or an intro, verse or chorus and suddenly you've got the nucleus of a song."

Fans will be thrilled to learn that Glenn remains as deeply immersed in the process as ever. "Parkinson's is a degenerative disease," Richie says, "so it gets steadily worse and you have to keep taking medication to keep it at bay. But the great thing with Glenn is that we've still got his mind. His mind's still sharp and his ideas are still sharp. I'll tell you what, man, I might have a riff or a part or a section and I don't know what it is, but it lacks something. Glenn will say, 'Try this' and I'll think, 'That's not gonna work. You're out of your mind…' and then I'll try it and see that it's the exact turnaround or riff or part that it needed to make it Judas Priest. So if he's having a tough day on guitar one day, he's still in there with us, coming up with ideas – almost like a producer role. And he's on some of the tracks so far already. But if he's having a bad day with the guitar, he can just throw out his ideas and honestly, that's what makes the difference sometimes." Andy Sneap, the British-born guitarist and studio guru who co-produced *Firepower*, has been tapped to fill in for Glenn on upcoming live performances.

As so many of their peers have retired, passed on or faded onto the heritage circuit, it's inspiring to hear the genuine excitement among the guys to write new material and to get it out to the fans. "If I'm not greatly mistaken," Rob says, "Priest is the longest-working heavy metal band out there – from 1969 to 2020. It's remarkable, it really is."

Whatever happens from here, Priest will be remembered long into the future for many reasons. Considering how he'd like history to view his band, Glenn is comfortingly to the point. "A legacy of true heavy metal," he offers, noting that he hopes it's a legacy that'll "inspire the shape of metal to come."

"It's a simple statement: 'Judas Priest, Defenders of the Faith'," adds Rob. "Because that's what we've been doing in our lives in metal for all these years. Flying the flag of heavy metal for 50 years, with more to come."

STAY TUNED TO WWW.JUDASPRIEST.COM FOR MORE DETAILS ON THEIR UPCOMING 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Glenn Tipton: still a vital part of the Priest family

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GLENN TIPTON

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY Judas Priest

We got some of metal's finest names to wish the Brummie legends a happy 50th

"Massive congratulations on 50 years of heavy metal! An incredible accomplishment, and something to be very proud of. Judas Priest defined everything that was cool about metal for me. Over the top, intense, fast, raging guitars, epic lyrics about strength and overcoming, hell… I must have stared at the cover of *Unleashed In The East* for at least 48 hours of my life thinking, 'This is the coolest band I've ever seen.' All Hail Priest!"
ROBB FLYNN, MACHINE HEAD

"We were supposed to celebrate Judas Priest's 50th anniversary on tour with them across the States, and were really looking forward to doing that with a band that influenced not just us but the entire genre we live and love. Then this stupid virus came along and ruined that. Death to corona, long live Judas Priest."
PÄR SUNDSTRÖM, SABATON

"The first time I saw Judas Priest was in 1980. I was just starting out with my first band and I was truly blown away. They became my favourite band and Rob Halford was my idol. Little did I know that this would be my first big tour with Warlock in 1986. When my manager said that we'd be the support act for Priest on the upcoming Turbo tour, I almost fainted and I immediately ran to my boss and told him I would quit my job. He was speechless, but I knew I was doing the right thing. Going on tour with my favourite metal band, my heroes. It was the best tour of my life and to thank Priest for this amazing experience, I recorded *Breaking The Law* – my favourite song – on our *Classic Diamonds* album. One night, when Priest played in my former hometown in Germany, Rob took my hand and said, 'Let's do this one together.' I'll never forget this feeling of absolute metal bliss! Congratulations Judas Priest for these incredible 50 years of true metal, power and tremendous inspiration! You're the real thing! We love you!"
DORO PESCH

"Congratulations on your 50th anniversary! Ever since we collaborated together four years ago and you told us to 'stay metal', your words have always stuck with us and it gave us the courage to believe in our music. We hope to see you again soon!"
SU-METAL, BABYMETAL

"A big congrats to Judas Priest on your 50th anniversary! I vividly remember our first encounter was at a festival and the band was immensely kind to us. It's always such an honour to see the legendary Metal God and we can't wait to see what the future has in store for the band! We love Judas Priest!"
MOAMETAL, BABYMETAL

"Judas Priest has and will always be a big inspiration for Helloween from the first minute on. No other band embossed classic heavy metal with such a fantastic, unique and at the same time very melodic style like this British band. Halford is one of the best and most innovative, emotional singers ever in this genre. K.K. and Tipton, world-class twin guitars. Without those guys heavy metal would probably be sounding a lot more boring! Happy birthday to the heroes!"
MARKUS GROSSKOPF, HELLOWEEN

"We raise our hammers high and salute one of the greatest and most influential bands in heavy metal history. If someone were to ask me how I would define heavy metal music, I would simply put on *Painkiller* and let the music do the talking. My best memory is still when I got to see them live on the same tour on February 2, 1991 in Stockholm. Little did I know that after that we'd get to share the stage many times, and I treasured every single time."
JOACIM CANS, HAMMERFALL

"Having loved Priest for close to four decades, it's wonderful to see this metal leviathan hitting 50! I've seen them numerous times over the years. The last time was five years ago at Brixton Academy – they sounded immense! Rob Halford was possibly the best I've ever heard him and it was also the first time I'd seen them with Richie, who is a fantastic injection of energy into the live show. It was such a great gig. I definitely sang my heart out with the crowd and had a few beers! Happy Birthday indeed, Judas Priest."
AARON AEDY, PARADISE LOST

"I believe I stand with the majority of anyone even remotely connected to metal when I say Priest is part of my musical DNA! Fronted by the undisputed God of Metal, they have influenced and reinvented the hard rock culture for several decades and moved generations of fans and musicians alike. I have found great inspiration in the immense diversity of their output, from the mellow, progressive elements of *Sad Wings Of Destiny*, through to the synth-laden *Turbo* and the overpowering *Painkiller*, and they're still at the top of their game with *Firepower*. Hats off, huge thanks and big congrats on the anniversary!"
IHSAHN

"Flashback to 1981: Accept are on their first ever 'real' professional tour, supporting Judas Priest all over Europe. We are just a bunch of wide-eyed, clueless kids in our early 20s, watching our heroes' every move from the side of the stage each night. They were larger than life! True professionals. Well, here we are, nearly 40 years later, and Judas Priest are still out there kicking ass! A part of me will always be that little kid from back then, admiring my heroes. Congratulations and Happy 50th Birthday, Judas Priest!"
WOLF HOFFMANN, ACCEPT

"I do a podcast now about the history of heavy metal and I emphasise the importance of Priest. Their *Exciter* song did more for metal than the World Steel Association! Happy Birthday, Judas Priest."
FENRIZ, DARKTHRONE

"Happy birthday, Judas Priest! One of my fondest memories associated with Priest is the date October 23, 1979: they played the Santa Monica Civic, on tour in support of *Unleashed In The East*. When Priest hit the stage, we were mesmerised. They stormed through their classic songs – *Sinner, Victim Of Changes, Genocide* and *White Heat, Red Hot* were some standouts – and each song pushed us closer to an audio orgasm! We noticed Eddie Van Halen on the side of the stage and so did Glenn, who smiled at him and played the intro to *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love*. Rob Halford is the best heavy metal singer of all time and the guitar duo of Glenn and K.K. is the major influence on any guitar tandem that followed."
JOHN BUSH, ARMORED SAINT

"I discovered Priest on *Sad Wings Of Destiny* in '76, and then *Stained Class*. I saw them live a few times around the local venues in Yorkshire, Sheffield and a few other places on the Stained Class tour, so I was a big fan of Judas Priest before I actually met them. Our first tour was with Judas Priest in Europe in 1980. It was their British Steel tour and we were on the Wheels Of Steel tour – two steels! Both albums were in the charts. Playing the sold-out shows everywhere and watching them play every night was inspiring stuff. We're playing with them next year, all being well, so I'm looking forward to seeing them again and congratulations for making 50!"
BIFF BYFORD, SAXON

"*Heavy* Birthday to Judas Priest! We celebrate your many metal moments of your monumental metal music pioneering and defining eras. Hail The Metal Gods! With vivid detail I can still recall our first support to Priest in the Netherlands. Rolling up to a magnificent 800-year-old countryside venue, it was a sight to behold, especially by all of their iconic stage leathers airing out in the Dutch sun on a barbed wire fence… there were fans climbing up to suck out the sweat! The show they played that night still chills me to my bones. Like an armoured tank division they are still unstoppable, full of firepower and very, very *heavy*. Here's to another 50!"
JOEL O'KEEFFE, AIRBOURNE

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FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

To celebrate 20 years of roaming the planet, Mastodon have released a collection of rare cuts and unreleased bangers. They tell us the stories behind them

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

Twenty years ago, a wild Mastodon appeared. In honour of the occasion, the beardy Atlantans have put together a rarities collection featuring instrumentals, live tracks and one-offs. "It's awesome to have the same four guys in the band, because we went through all of it together," smiles drummer/vocalist Brann Dailor. "Listening to this album was a trip down memory lane for me." We asked him and guitarist Bill Kelliher to give us a guided tour.

PRESS

Mastodon (left to right): Bill Kelliher, Troy Sanders, Brent Hinds, Brann Dailor

1 FALLEN TORCHES

(Previously unreleased, 2020)

Bill Kelliher (guitars/vocals): "*Fallen Torches* has so many elements of Mastodon in it, that that's what makes it such a great song. We had done a European tour on *Emperor Of Sand* [in 2017], and we had brought [Neurosis vocalist] Scott Kelly with us. We were toying around with the idea of writing a whole record with him, and we would sit backstage and play acoustic guitar. After that tour, Brann had just come over to my studio in my house one day and said, 'Hey, let's try to write a song for this thing with Scott we're gonna do.' And he had a real simple idea for the main riff, which is like [sings the riff]. And that's usually how he and I will write together. He'll come over and he'll hum an idea in my ear, and I'll say, 'OK, let me figure out how to play that on a guitar.' When he and I get together, we're pretty proficient."

2 A COMMOTION

(Feistodon, 2012)

Brann Dailor (drums/vocals): "We were on *Later... With Jools Holland*, and we were so excited to be invited. Heavy metal kind of gets pushed under the carpet, so whenever we get invited to these things, we feel like we don't belong there, you know? We're like these dirty heavy metal guys. But all the bands were coming up to us. The Feist people came up, and they're like, 'Oh, we're huge fans.' It was a mutual admiration society. We went out afterwards, we got drinks, and then the idea came up from Leslie [Feist, Canadian singer-songwriter]. She was like, 'We should cover each other's songs for a Record Store Day thing.' Feist covered *Black Tongue*, and we covered *A Commotion*. It's probably one of my favourite things outside of doing an album that I think that we've done. Just the fact that we traded songs with somebody that you would never, ever expect. I wanna do more of that!"

3 ASLEEP IN THE DEEP (INSTRUMENTAL)

(Once More 'Round The Sun, 2014)

Bill: "It's a bit of a departure for us; the songwriting is kind of different. It's a little more lightheaded. When I first was writing it and Brann was singing over it, it had this weird, almost like a Radiohead kind of feel, where it was a little melancholy and a bit dark."

Brann: "When I think of *Asleep In The Deep* now, I really think of our friend Ikey [Owens], who played keyboards and piano for The Mars Volta and later the Jack White band. He passed away a few years ago. I remember going to pick him up in Nashville, and then driving him back to the studio in Franklin, so it's like 45 minutes each way. And it's just cats and dogs, raining like crazy, in my big old Ford, E350 van. He came out and played some beautiful synthesisers. *Asleep In The Deep* has a lot of ornaments on it. It's like a heavily decorated Christmas tree."

"WE INVENTED THE BIGFOOT CYCLOPS"

BRANN DAILOR

Mastodon, for your ent-ertainment

4 CAPILLARIAN CREST (LIVE)

(Blood Mountain, 2006)

Brann: "I think it was recorded on the Slayer tour, when we played in 2006, in Canada. We played the Vancouver Canucks arena, so I was kind of excited because I'm a big fan of ice hockey, because I'm from up north, and you gotta figure out things to do in the winter, because the winter is 10 months long. I played ice hockey for a number of years. It was exciting to see their dressing room and hang out there. *Capillarian Crest*, to me, was like reaching the heart of the mountain. But I could see this crest, and then thousands of capillaries coming up over the crest itself, almost like vines, you know? And blood pumping through those capillaries, and using those to propel yourself up the mountain, and past the heart, to the apex. That's what I had in mind, anyways."

PRESS

5 A SPOONFUL WEIGHS A TON

(Side By Side – A Spoonful Weighs A Ton, 2012)

Brann: "We did that cover in the same session as *A Commotion*. We're all big Flaming Lips fans. It takes me back to the first European tour I ever did, when I was in Today Is The Day, and we were opening for Neurosis and Voivod. It was 1999, and that record [*The Soft Bulletin*] had just come out, and the sound guy for Neurosis – this guy named Dave Clark – would check the PA with *A Spoonful Weighs A Ton*. Every day I'd go out there and listen, because I'd wanna hear it all big. I think fans tend to think musicians only listen to the kind of music they make, like all I do is sit around and listen to heavy metal, and I just don't. Your average teenage boy that listens to Amon Amarth is not thinking that his beloved singer of Amon Amarth is sitting around listening to Sade!"

6 TOE TO TOES (INSTRUMENTAL)

(Cold Dark Place, 2017)

Brann: "It tells me you don't have to be super-prepared to go into putting a song together for it to be great. On *Emperor Of Sand*, we laid everything down, but a couple of things had been ignored; the arrangements weren't figured out. But Brendan [O'Brien, producer] was like, 'Let's take a day, and we'll go through that one, and the other one', which was *Jaguar God*. They ended up being two of my favourite tracks. So that is almost therapeutic for me, to *understand* that, to relinquish those feelings of 'I wanna control everything.' Some beautiful things can happen in a whimsical state."

Bill: "I thought it should have been on *Emperor Of Sand*, but Brent [Hinds, guitar/vocals] really felt strongly about not putting it on the record at the last minute, and we were sick of arguing about it. The *Cold Dark Place* EP was his idea."

7 CIRCLE OF CYSQUATCH (LIVE)

(Blood Mountain, 2006)

Brann: "The first time we ever played it was an encore, in London, at the Scala. We had done an encore already, but the people just wanted more, because we were so great! Ha ha ha! And so we had been working on *Circle Of Cysquatch*. I don't even think it had a name yet, or vocals, really. That's the first song that we wrote for *Blood Mountain*. I remember the first riff, it was a Bill riff that he had totally forgotten about, and I found it on a cassette tape that was from my little dictaphone that I used to carry around and hum into. I was like, 'Bill, you remember this riff?' And he was like, 'No, I don't remember that at all.' 'Well, can you figure out how to play it? Because it's badass!' It's about a Bigfoot cyclops. It's not an actual thing; we invented it."

The rifflords cometh

8 ATLANTA (FEAT. GIBBY HAYNES)

(Adult Swim Singles, 2014)

Brann: "We were on tour with Slayer, Amon Amarth and Trivium [in 2008], and then we ended our trip at the All Tomorrow's Parties festival. So this is where we met Gibby, because the Butthole Surfers were playing. I remember turning around to get a towel and a drink from my drum tech, Ozzy, and Ozzy was not sitting in the seat back there, it was Gibby Haynes, and he was flipping me off! And he did *not* have a towel or water for me. I was like, 'What the fuck?' So we met him there and – surprise – him and Brent became fast friends. Because you know, birds of a feather, flock together. And they are similar feathers. Anyway, a couple of years later, we were writing for *Once More 'Round The Sun*, and Brent had this song. He's like, 'Gibby wants to sing on a track.' So we sent it to him, and that's what he did."

PRESS

"BLOOD & THUNDER IS LIKE MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB TO ME!"

BILL KELLIHER

Gosh, we wonder who ordered the clown, *Brann*

9 JAGUAR GOD (INSTRUMENTAL)

(Emperor Of Sand, 2017)

Bill: "It's a very powerful song, and it's beautifully written, and we've got Mike Keneally [Dethklok, Joe Satriani] on keyboards. We want to let the fans use it as a soundtrack. *Jaguar God* reminds me of the closing of the record. In the studio, that was the last song we recorded. Getting out of the studio, and my mom had passed away, and it was kind of like putting it to rest. All that bottled-up energy and emotions and feelings and everything that was going on, we've got it all inside this bottle. We've got the genie back in the bottle kind of scenario. And that song is perfect, because the way it starts out and ends, it's bookended with the same emotion on both sides, so it's just a great way to cap that whole *Emperor Of Sand* moment in time."

10 CUT YOU UP WITH A LINOLEUM KNIFE

(Aqua Teen Hunger Force Colon Movie Film For Theaters Colon The Soundtrack, 2007)

Brann: "We'd crash at somebody's house after a gig, and then we'd sit up and watch *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* on DVD. We love that show, it cracks us up. So Cartoon Network is a Turner company, and Turner is located here in Atlanta. One day I got a phone call and it was like, 'Hey this is Dave [Willis] from *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*, I got your number from so and so, I want you guys to be in the movie.' And I said, 'When do you need music by?' He said, 'We'd like to record it Monday morning.' Like, what? It's Friday night! Sunday afternoon, Bill and I went down to the studio and we wrote that song in a couple of hours. We recorded it on Monday morning. I sang like King Diamond, and Brent got his thrashiest vocal going. It was hilarious!"

11 BLOOD & THUNDER (LIVE)

(Leviathan, 2004)

Bill: "That was a riff that Brann had come to me with. Basically, he came up with the entire song as far as the instrumentation. As a guitarist who's been playing for over 30 years, I was like, 'Well, it doesn't do much.' But I've learned, you know… I love bands like the Ramones and they're three-chord rock, and it's some of the best songs ever written. So I see why people like *Blood & Thunder*. It's punchy, and it's fast, and we've got [Clutch vocalist] Neil Fallon, who we all love and adore and admire. I knew it was a great song, I just never thought out of all the songs we have, and all the really complicated ones, and the super-heavy ones… I look on YouTube and people are trying to learn that song, which, to me, is like *Mary Had A Little Lamb* on guitar!"

PRESS

Looking super-stylish in their Canadian tuxedos

CLOWN: JIMMY HUBBARD

12 WHITE WALKER

(Catch The Throne: The Mixtape, Volume II, 2015)

Brann: "They wanted us to do a song because they wanted a heavy song, but I kept thinking of almost like a campfire song. It was the end of the [2014] European tour, we were flying from Helsinki to London, and London to home. We got on the flight, and it was winter, and I started singing it in my head, and then I hummed it into my phone. By the time we got to London, I had it pretty much all worked out. I sent the lyrics to Troy [Sanders, bass/vocals]. When we got home, I went over to Bill's, he got his acoustic guitar out, and we started working on it, then we recorded it. It was pretty quick. It was sung from the point of view of a common person who's heard the mythology of White Walkers, and maybe that song has been sung a thousand times throughout the ages."

13 HALLOWEEN (INSTRUMENTAL)

(One More 'Round The Sun, 2014)

Bill: "We thought it was finished, but then Brent just started playing the very last riff, which is the one that the solo goes over. And we were in the rehearsal room with all our gear on, and he just kept playing it. And we were playing along, and then after three or four minutes of that, it's like, 'OK, well we beat that to death, let's stop playing this now', and I took my guitar off, but he just kept playing it. I'll never forget that. We all walked out of the room and into the control room of the studio with the glass so you could look out there and see the band, and it was just him in the room. And we were like, 'I don't know what to do. I'm not gonna stop him. He's just going off on that riff, because he really wants that riff to be on the song.' So it went in the song."

Safe to say, the block party wasn't what the lads had envisaged

PRESS

14 CRYSTAL SKULL (LIVE)

(Blood Mountain, 2006)

Brann: "We play it a lot, live. It's got the cool steel drum intro. When we recorded it, all those guys left and went on a sailboat for the day in Seattle. It's like, 'You guys go on your sailboat ride and I'm going to drive around Seattle and see if I can find two 50-gallon drums to record this intro that I have in my head.' I drove around with Matt Bayles, the producer, and we found this homeless guy who had a bunch of 50-gallon drums near him. We went over and said, 'Hey man, are these your 50-gallon drums?' So we gave him some money and we borrowed 'em, like, 'OK, we'll bring these back in a couple of hours.' We brought them to the studio and I played 20-something tracks of drums. Every bit of those drums got played for that intro."

15 ORION

(Remastered: Metallica's Master Of Puppets Revisited, 2006)

Brann: "*Kerrang!* got a bunch of bands to do covers for the 20th anniversary of *Master Of Puppets*. We chose *Orion*, because it didn't have any vocals, and that was good for us! Plus, it's one of my favourite Metallica songs. They're known as being the really super-heavy metal band, but there are a lot of beautiful moments in their music that don't get talked about. It's also a look into the soul that was Cliff Burton – what a great person and beautifully talented musician he was. We started getting sounds for *Blood Mountain* using that particular song, just to see what tones we had going on."

Bill: "*Kerrang!* never mastered it, so the song came out *really* quiet compared to everyone else. We were *really* bummed about that. So we were like, 'Well, we've gotta master it properly, and put it on the record nice and loud.'"

16 IRON TUSK (LIVE)

(Leviathan, 2004)

Brann: "It reminds me of our first arena trip in the UK, and I can't remember where, but we were opening for Hatebreed, Slipknot and Slayer. And we were *so* nervous: 'They're gonna hate us, they're gonna throw stuff at us, they're gonna yell "Slayer!" the whole time we play. But we're gonna do it anyways cause we're big boys.' And we opened with *Iron Tusk*, and I swear to God, the whole place was jumping up and down to the rhythm. I saw Brent looking back and being like, 'Holy shit! I can't believe this!'"

Bill: "It's a real mover. I feel like playing really, really old songs, they feel really slow and easy. Maybe because I've played them for the past 20 years, or maybe because we've matured as a band and gotten more proficient at our instruments, so we kind of write stuff that's a little trickier. But there's nothing wrong with a simple song that's catchy and gets people moving." H

***MEDIUM RARITIES* IS OUT NOW VIA WARNERS. THE VINYL EDITION IS RELEASED ON OCTOBER 16**

spiritual healing

Taking his love of 90s metal and channelling it through the prism of abrasive rap music, Ghostemane is the breakout superstar of a new generation of genre-mashing artists

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

The crowd at 2019's Lollapalooza festival are primed with a remix of Korn's *Freak On A Leash*, before Eric Whitney runs onstage. Corpsepainted and wearing a dress and fishnets, he starts rapping and jumping in front of a flashing black metal logo that spells out the name of his alter ego: Ghostemane. Before long, a fan is paraded out by an executioner and chained to a stretcher, where he will remain for the duration of the set, getting his face tattooed with their lyrics.

Eric might be at the forefront of what's been dubbed trap metal, mixing beats and bars with industrial noise and aggressive vocals, but make no mistake – he's one of us. Blending the sounds of his idol, Trent Reznor, with the aesthetics of Marilyn Manson and a love of hip hop, he's bringing 90s metal culture into the 2020s, repackaging it for a new generation and blurring its boundaries. He's supported fellow genre disruptors Code Orange, been mentored by Slipknot's Clown, and recorded with legendary producer Ross Robinson. In short, he's this decade's king of the misfits.

GHOSTEMANE

PRESS

"It's no secret that 90s nu metal stuff is a huge inspiration, because I feel like that's when music was the Wild Wild West, and all these bands were experimenting and demonstrating their style to the fullest, and there were no real rules," he explains, while he gets ready for a photoshoot today. He's wearing pale make-up, so his eyes look "tired and sunken in as usual", and a suit from a designer friend. "That was the pinnacle of the mixture of rap and rock, so to speak. There was Rage Against The Machine, Korn, Slipknot, you name it. The Golden Age is never gonna happen again, but it doesn't hurt to show the kids who like my stuff what I came up on."

Eric's music education was initially patchy. He was raised in Florida and had what he terms "a bizarre upbringing". When he was four years old, his father was in a car accident, leading to long-term back injuries that ended his career as a phlebotomist. His mum, who was pregnant with Eric's brother at the time, became his dad's full-time carer. With his parents always at home, there was little privacy for Eric, and his dad ruled the roost; he had to get straight A grades or risk his wrath, and there was no access to the internet.

At school, Eric aced tests but struggled with the social aspect. "I didn't really have a lot of friends because I always found relating to other people to be sort of like this game that I wasn't good at," he recalls. "Something where there's rules and there's things to say and things you don't say, and a way you're supposed to act, and I just couldn't figure it out. And it got to be really frustrating, and I ended up giving up, especially when I was in high school. I kept to myself most of the time."

He did find escapism, though. When he was 13, he got into Green Day, NOFX, MxPx, Pennywise and the Warped Tour compilations. Then it was the output of Victory Records and metalcore. "I'd hear screaming in certain songs and think, 'Damn, I wanna hear more of that stuff!'" At age 14 he picked up a guitar, and soon discovered In Flames via the *Tony Hawk's Underground* soundtrack. But he had to be careful; bands with extreme imagery on their CD covers, like Slipknot, were banned by his dad. "Metal was taboo in my house, because it was too heavy," he explains. "In the back of my mind, I knew one day that I'd fall in love with it truly."

Eric was 17 when his dad passed away. Both of them had come down with pneumonia and, from what he can glean from family members, his dad took an accidental overdose of pain medication and became unresponsive. For Eric, it was a tumultuous time of conflicting emotions, as he'd lost someone who had been a constant presence in his life, yet a source of oppression. He stopped "giving a shit about making friends so much, and caring more about figuring myself out and cutting loose," dying his hair and getting tattoos. The first, across his chest, was for his dad: words from a poem he used to read to Eric.

"It's about this angel carrying a child, and then he hits a point where he's coming of age, and he basically tells the child that he has to take it from here. And it always stuck with me, because I felt like until that point where he died, he was sort of… guiding, for lack of a better word… but really just controlling every bit of my life, actually. Once he was gone, I had to grow up, really quick."

The poem is intended to be positive, but for Eric the meaning was bittersweet. "I didn't really know how to feel," he explains. "I obviously missed him to an extent, but I didn't want him back. I was glad that he wasn't there anymore. And I wouldn't change that at all, because if it didn't happen, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now."

What Eric is doing now is Ghostemane – a project designed to alchemise his diverse influences into something bleeding edge. Forthcoming eighth album *Anti-Icon* is the culmination of the identity he's spent the last decade or so working out.

Following his transformation into a teenage alternative kid, Eric found hardcore via his musician cousin from New York, getting into the likes of Cold World, Trapped Under Ice and Turnstile, before connecting with people in his local scene. After leaving school he worked in telephone sales, but by 21 he was also in hardcore band Nemesis and their doom metal side-project, Seven Serpents, as well as being immersed in hip hop, death metal and black metal. While experimenting with solo music, he came up with a song called *Ghostemane*. The 'Ghoste' part came from an inside joke with his friends; due to social anxiety, he would often pull out of plans at the last minute, ghosting them. The other half references the 90s Southern phonk subgenre.

> **"ROSS ROBINSON MADE ME A HEADCASE"**
> ERIC WHITNEY

"It came from me being antisocial, basically. I thought it had a nice ring to it, and once I was able to talk more about myself, I had the plan to let it be known how antisocial I was and anxious," he explains. "Kind of wearing the name as a badge of honour, basically, and not being ashamed of it."

Early attempts to fuse rap with hardcore in 2014 were not good. "It felt too Frankensteined together, and too done just for the sake of doing it to sound cool, as opposed to making it a true expression," he admits. But he slowly progressed, even moving to California and becoming part of a collective called Schemaposse with late rapper Lil Peep, until they disbanded in 2017. That year, he released a song called *Hades*, featuring the line, *'95 Marilyn with less regard for my actions'*, and it's not much of a stretch to link new album title *'Anti-Icon'* to *Antichrist Superstar*. "He's obviously the godfather," Eric smiles.

It wasn't just the way Manson championed the world's outsiders, exposing American society as the real sickness, but the way he transitioned from journalist to musician, essentially faking it to make it.

"It says in his book that even when he was younger and writing about his band in the local paper, the band didn't even exist yet. I relate to that on a lot of levels, where you are trying to show somebody that you're capable of something," he says. "I took that energy, even before I did music. Some of the best jobs I got were because I said I had done something before, when I hadn't. I just knew that I could."

If Manson's the godfather, then Trent Reznor's a straight-up God. In 2018's *Ball Gag*, Eric quotes Nine Inch Nails' hip-grinding dancefloor-filler, *Closer*, rapping *'Fuck You Like An Animal' bumpin' in the background.'* "He's my number one icon," confesses Eric. "I produce and write, and track all of my own stuff, and he obviously does too. He's one of my biggest inspirations to start doing that and not rely on other people so much."

But there's more. After the infamous drug-fuelled pain of *Closer*'s parent record, *The Downward Spiral*, and its follow-up, *The Fragile*, Trent kicked his habits, got married and settled down, while reaching new creative peaks in his career and garnering mainstream success. "I think Trent Reznor is a huge inspiration, more so than anyone can be. I see myself with a family, obviously, and getting older, and not having any sort of substance abuse problems."

Trent's experiences strike a particular chord with Eric, who was addicted to opiates while he was making *Anti-Icon*. Acoustic album closer *Falling Down* is his most vulnerable and autobiographical song to date, and was made all the more challenging by the involvement of super-producer Ross Robinson, known for using controversial techniques to push his subjects into their most broken emotional states to get the best take possible.

"He's really good at making you a headcase," reveals Eric. "Just amplifying all the good things and all the bad things about yourself simultaneously, to where you have no choice but to give him what he wants. When we first starting tracking, I was feeling really terrible, physically. I was getting clean and going through withdrawals, and he was just getting in my head. I've got this guy trying to dig deeper and deeper and deeper, and trying to get me to spill out why I wrote this word instead of this other word. But, it ended up being the greatest recording experience I've ever had. I came out a better person."

It's because of this respect for music's heritage and key players, and years spent in a state of self-examination and artistic development, writing songs and recording instruments, that the label 'trap metal'

Ghostemane:
star power

rankles with Eric. To him, it's associated with Soundcloud rappers who get beats from YouTube, or merely scream over a distorted 808. He does, however, see the value in having a new scene like nu metal, to get people hyped about heavy music again. And if it has to be called trap metal? He'll live with it.

"Regardless of whether I like it or not, it's a thing that people are gonna say," he admits. "When I talk to the Slipknot dudes, they tell me the exact same thing. Like, when they came out, and they busted their ass on all this music, people were calling it nu metal, and they were like, 'What the fuck?!' And I can see at the time, that would suck. People are gonna say what they're gonna say I guess, and all that really matters is who's actually listening."

Even though *Anti-Icon* is Ghostemane's eighth album, and he's done a slew of side-projects and guest appearances, he's content with the fact some metallers are only discovering him now. This is the perfect time, he insists. It's his heaviest record yet, and the first time he feels fully himself. He's even dropped the black metal logo style; as proud as he is of his influences – today he gushes over a test pressing of Darkthrone's *A Blaze In The Northern Sky*, which has pride of place in his LA home studio – he feels established enough to move beyond borrowed signifiers. With another touch of Manson, he talks of how the gap between Eric and Ghostemane has narrowed, resulting in greater authenticity. In other words, what you're getting is the real deal.

"I think I've subconsciously spent the last few years trying to integrate Eric with Ghostemane more to where they're both the same person, and it doesn't have to be this thing that I switch back and forth on," he says. "It's now become this thing where it's the same guy."

***ANTI-ICON* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 21 VIA BLACKMAGE. GHOSTEMANE IS DUE TO TOUR THE UK IN FEBRUARY 2021**

caught in a trap

Eric Whitney picks the albums that have influenced Ghostemane

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL
(NINE INCH NAILS, 1994)
"It's a magnum opus of an album, from beginning to end. The intro is a song in itself. The intensity is just there, the entire way through; even the slower moments are all part of the same experience. Everything flows into each other, and that's something I'll always have present in my records."

ELLIOTT SMITH
(EITHER/OR, 1997)
"I've only been listening to it for three years. Right around the time I started going through my stuff with addiction and severe depression, that record was just on repeat, front to back, multiple times a day, every single day. There's no filler, there isn't a single line of bullshit. It all just hits super-hard."

AQUEMINI
(OUTKAST, 1998)
"André 3000's another one who writes and records his instruments, and you can *hear* it in there, and obviously I derive inspiration from him. The flow vocally, the way he uses triplets. The way he will take a four-syllable word and fit it into a rap verse is something I've always aspired to do."

PERRY FARRELL IS AN ENIGMA

In fact, he might just be his generation's last true enigma. Ahead of his blockbuster new box set, we were granted an audience with the Jane's Addiction legend who helped define alt rock

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER

WALID AZAMI

There is a small chance that by the time you're reading this, Perry Farrell will have lost his voice. The former frontman of Jane's Addiction, Porno For Pyros and Satellite Party, the founder of Lollapalooza – the festival that became the template for Coachella and a host of other bohemian-minded, open-air behemoths – and an artist whose drug intake was legendary even for the LA scene he emerged from, is only now, at the age of 61, starting to feel the effect of a lifetime's worth of revolutionising, rock'n'roll hedonism.

"I'm set to get three vertebrae in my neck replaced next week," says the singer, sounding remarkably unconcerned, from his home in the coastal idyll of the Santa Monica Canyon. "I feel fine, it's just that I've had a pain in the neck for the past three years from years of singing and headbanging. They're going to go in there and do microsurgery. It sounds amazing and scary and yes, there is this very small chance that I would lose my voice, because it's in an area near the vocal box, but I just want to get it behind me. I'm expecting, within four weeks, to start singing again."

Perry Farrell isn't one to dwell on downsides, or for that matter, much else other than the immeasurable vistas of possibility he still sees ahead of him. Considering he has a nine-disc, largely retrospective box set out called *The Glitz; The Glamour!* that takes in his pre-Jane's goth band Psi Com, Satellite Party's *Ultra Payloaded* and his two solo albums – 2001's *Song Yet To Be Sung* and last year's *Kind Heaven* – alongside a host of rarities and remixes, Perry's ever-curious brain is only tangentially occupied with taking stock, reliving the past or considering the huge legacy he's engendered. Charming, engagingly idealistic and fuelled by a mercurial urgency that doesn't entirely belong to this dimension, he has a habit of taking the scenic route from any question you might put to him, but one where wisdom, innocence and wonder are constant features of the landscape.

"I tend to love to look forward, and then sometimes forget that I'm missing a shoe, so to speak," he says when asked how the box set came about. "But my management team have really done a stellar job of reaching out and finding where all my music was located. When they asked me where the Satellite Party record was, I said, 'I bought it back off the record company [Columbia]!' They said, 'Well, let's put it out.' I mean, you can't find it on the typical routes of distribution – Spotify didn't have it. And I have to admit this… I wouldn't say I'm an airhead on purpose, or that I purposely choose to ignore things, but there's a certain side of me that enjoys burying treasure. It becomes that much more valuable when you discover it. It's kind of like looking for Atlantis."

Perry Farrell found the genus of greatness with Psi Com

For many, the biggest discovery on *The Glitz; The Glamour* will be the ultra-rare five-track EP from Perry's first band, Psi Com. Formed in 1981 and steeped in the kind of Bauhaus and The Cult-infused post-punk and goth that's seeing a scene-wide revival now, it was a sound hardly native to the sun-drenched West Coast – even if The Cult ended up gravitating there in return. But for all its stark, angular dispatches from the shadows, you can hear the genesis of something irrepressibly inquisitive – a tentative roadmap for what was to come. How much of himself does he recognise in those early recordings?

"You know, I hadn't listened to those tapes since, because my head is always in the moment," admits Perry. "But I saw that I was a young man who was trying very hard to aspire towards greatness. I was giving it a real effort. I wanted to be the type of person that Jim Morrison was, or Ian Curtis was. Jim Morrison could be outrageous, and I have my own personality, so I'm not going to be exactly like either of those, but what those men shot for was greatness, and at least I made the attempt."

For Perry, aspiring to that kind of greatness wasn't an end in itself. As with his heroes, it wasn't the fulfilment of blind ambition, but of a worldview, however embryonic it might have then been – a hunger to force the world to account for you, to effect change.

"If you're shooting for greatness like 'Make America Great', that's bullshit. If you're saying, 'Let's make the world great, let's make ourselves great', then that's brotherhood, that's a great spirit. There was a movement around that time, but we were mixing quite well with everybody. So, for example, you would see at our shows rockabillies, punks, S&M bondage people, gays, fashionistas. And then there were kids who were coming from the valley who liked rock and hard rock and Van Halen.

"So it was a great time," Perry continues, "because we were creating, and culture was happening. It's a wonderful time when nobody really knows anything, and so you were free to do what thou wilt. I had the luxury of being free, because I had no money, and I didn't have many obligations. So that gave me the most freedom that I ever had in those days to be creative and to try things, and the things that didn't quite work, you discard. It's kind of like car design – you don't make new car designs because your car is broke, right? You make your new car design because you are trying to evolve the concept of an automobile."

Although not included in the box set, Jane's Addiction remain the nucleus around which Perry Farrell's career has spun. Their debut, self-titled live album in 1987, and the two studio albums that followed, 1988's *Nothing Shocking* and 1990's landmark *Ritual De Lo Habitual*, might have had their roots in the Sunset Strip sound – you can see the members at a street party, alongside members of Guns N' Roses, on Penelope Spheeris's 1988 documentary, *The Decline Of Western Civilization Part II: The*

COURTESY OF PERRY FARRELL

Satellite Party: Perry Farrell's gleam team

Perry puts the 'satori' in 'sartorial'

JARED POLIN

"LOOK FOR THAT UTOPIAN WORLD"

Metal Years – but they were a glorious, liberating mutation, too. Some of that was down to Dave Navarro's soaring, expansive leads – as one writer put it, "Jane's Addiction rock out in 360°" – but the freak flag they flew was hoisted by Perry.

Androgynous, dreadlocked and flamboyant, with a face that bordered on the cubist, the frontman didn't offer a haven for fellow misfits; he offered a Technicolor celebration of difference, and allowance for it to run free. As he sung on *Ain't No Right* from *Ritual...*, before its exhilarating, jet-fuelled guitar 'whoosh!', *'I am skin and bones, I am pointy nose / But it motherfuckin' makes me try!'.*

"You have to have a message that is helpful and healing and all those other things," says Perry. "The stories on those albums were very personal, but anyone can do it. You really have to come to know yourself, and get in your head to the point where you can place your voice anywhere and assess the world, and project it back through art. It's just a practice."

Jane's' introduction of firecracker funk and dub amongst a host of spectacular, speculative detours wasn't mere eclecticism; it was a map of a mind that couldn't stay still. It was impossible to replicate, but in its breaking down of barriers and smashing of masculine norms, its influence on the grunge scene – and their own rejection of metal's mid/late 80s slide into posturing and conservatism – was immense. They were regularly cited by the likes of Rage Against The Machine, Tool and Soundgarden as the ground zero for alternative rock.

"I think we gained our freedom by doing excellent work, and that gave us our right to experiment," says Perry. "Our label trusted us, and we were fortunate. People were always saying something is dying, like, 'Rock'n'roll is dying.' They weren't seeing something growing. What I'm trying to tell you

'*Stop, now go!*': Perry directs LA's crosstown traffic

Jane's Addiction: alt rock's freaky ground zero

"I WANTED TO BE JIM MORRISON"

is, man, in this dystopian world, start looking for that utopian world."

That urge to remake the world in a utopian light has only become more pronounced since, from the creation of Lollapalooza, to his freeing of 2,300 Sudanese slaves in 2001 with money generated by a Jane's Addiction reunion, to his creation of a multimedia art and entertainment space in LA linked to his *Kind Heaven* album. That Perry Farrell has chosen to be defined by this outlook, rather than the traumas he's experienced, not least his mother's death by suicide when he was three, is testament to a man who's bound to the transformative nature of art.

"What's the point of dwelling on something that's terrible all the time?" he asks. "I'll tell you what my last four years have been. It started with my wife miscarrying, on election night. Now I can be as sad as the next guy about what's happened to my family and me, but most people have the same amount of tragedy. Everybody loses people that they love, so there we all share a common experience. If you lose them you never forget them. There is a certain compartment in my mind where it's still there. I don't discard it, it becomes part of a family album that you make beautiful, and that is what I choose to do."

***THE GLITZ; THE GLAMOUR* IS OUT ON NOVEMBER 6 VIA LAST MAN MUSIC**

WALID AZAMI

THE GLITZ SPIRIT

Perry Farrell chooses three of his favourite tracks from his box set

HO KA HEY
PSI COM
"That was a song about Native American nations. I admired their love of land – and it's to be studied. We should align ourselves more. This world went too far in the opposite direction. The world now has a pain in its neck like me. It's in the same boat as me. I feel like that."

MILKY AVE
SATELLITE PARTY – ULTRA PAYLOADED
"I always loved that song, and Flea helped record it at my house. I just think about him playing bass on it. It's about discussing with a lover, when you die, where you're going to go and will they be there too. It's a really happy vibe, but it can make you cry."

TURN OVER THE WORLD
PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED
"It's a collaboration with a young group called Starcrawler. They're really good kids, and they are real musicians. If I could ever speak about passing the torch to anybody in Los Angeles, it's this young woman who sings for them, and her name is Arrow."

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THE GREAT ESCAPE

Three years ago, Greg Puciato was experiencing panic attacks and going on drugs binges as The Dillinger Escape Plan came to an end. With his first solo album, he's finally found catharsis

WORDS: EMMA JOHNSTON • PICTURES: JIM LOUVAU

It's 11pm local time when we call Greg Puciato at his LA home, and he's just reaching the peak part of his day. A dedicated night owl, years of intense touring – first with The Dillinger Escape Plan and latterly with electronic project The Black Queen and metal supergroup Killer Be Killed – have set his body clock around stage times. So while the rest of the city sleeps, he's at his most creative as the minutes inch into the next morning. But since lockdown hit, having just finished wringing every drop of inspiration from his life for his debut solo album *Child Soldier: Creator Of God*, an unusual stillness has settled over his house, an inward zen while the world outside has gone insane.

"I get my energy from being by myself," he says. "I'm an only child, I can spend a lot of time doing nothing. I love to do nothing, it's my favourite thing in the world. And I mean true nothing. Not watching TV, not playing videogames, not accomplishing anything, just passing time doing nothing. So for me quarantine is not that big of a deal."

Considering how prolific he is, and given the wild energy he puts into his live shows, this inactivity seems unlikely, but it tallies with the wonderful cocktail of contradictions that Greg is: a deeply sensitive soul in the body of a cage fighter; a poet and artist who, with Dillinger especially, could summon demons from his

very core onstage; a deep thinker, worrier and warrior. *Child Soldier* is a perfect portrait of this complex character, at one moment vicious and snarling, at another butterfly-delicate and beautiful.

"I don't really think about genre," he says. "I just pick up an instrument and write. Something comes out of me and I don't think, 'Oh it's an aggressive song' or 'Oh it's a pop song', it just sounds like me. Like sometimes you're depressed and sometimes you're funny, sometimes you're angry. You just do what comes out of you and there it is."

It was never meant to be a solo album. Written in a torrent of inspiration, the skeletons of the songs were originally slated for the next Black Queen record, but as they started to take shape, they had other ideas for their own destiny.

"Once I realised what it was, then it excited me and I just felt like I had to keep going until whatever this creative vein is tapped out," he explains. "At some point it dried out and it was like, 'There it is, there's the record.'"

Greg seems to be in a really good place in 2020. He certainly went through the wringer three or four years back, as Dillinger came to an end. Their final-ever UK festival appearance, at Download 2017, was a towering moment of catharsis and celebration for the audience, the band seemingly on the form of their lives as they tore the place – and themselves – apart. But in order to even get onto the stage, their frontman had to take four Xanax before his anxiety could even begin to come under control. He was suffering such a huge panic attack, he says; he genuinely thought he was having a heart attack and was about to die.

"Having the thing that was a major part of my identity ending during that same time obviously didn't help," he says. "The stress of it ending and the stress of having to drag the dying corpse of it across the world for a couple of years was not healthy. But then at some point, around early 2018, it just started to fade away. It just started to dissipate, and I just thought, 'I'm through it.' I got to the other side of it. And now I feel great. It's fucking weird."

Things had to get worse before they got better, though. After those final Dillinger shows Greg's depression got the better of him, exacerbated by self-medication and denial. "When it comes to anxiety and depression, I think that's all stuff that you haven't allowed yourself to process," he continues. "I held off a lot of things for a long time that started to become unavoidable, and when they all started to hit me I wasn't prepared for it. The only thing I could be grateful for was I had creative outlets to be able to get through it. But I was drinking really heavily, doing tons of drugs, cocaine, I was partying a lot. I was numbing myself and avoiding having to deal with all this shit, and it fucked me up for a few years. I was like a different person; for three or four years I didn't even recognise myself, I thought I was gone. I was just this wreck of a person. But at some point you just process it and you're through it. I had a shit-ton of output during that time, I had a lot of shows, a lot of therapy, you just get through it somehow."

His eventual steps towards recovery in 2018 coincided with the second Black Queen album, *Infinite Games*, which became a foundation stone for this year's solo album. Greg admits that releasing something so vastly different to Dillinger, without knowing how people would react, was scary, but doing so gave him the confidence to put every different side of his personality out there on *Child Soldier*, an album in a true sense, intended to be listened to in its entirety. Released on Federal Prisoner, the label he set up with his friend, the visual artist Jesse Draxler (see 'Breakout Success', opposite), it finds Greg playing all of the instruments bar the drums, which he handed over to Chris Hornbrook of Poison The Well, former Dillinger sticksman Chris Pennie, and Killer Be Killed bandmate and Converge man Ben Koller.

"I'm such a control freak I thought about trying to learn how to play drums," he says. "I had to talk myself out of it, like, 'Dude, you're going too far. In three months are you really going to be as good as these guys who've been playing drums their whole life? Stop it, get out of here, don't be an idiot.'"

Fittingly, for such a deeply personal project, the themes of freedom and breaking ties come up throughout the record. Greg is evasive when it comes to picking apart individual lyrics, not wanting to reveal the true stories of real people in his life. But he does put its appeal down to his lack of filter while writing.

"I don't really decide what a song is going to be about before I write it, and for me it's more like therapy, journalling, and trying to be open enough that I can let whatever needs to come out of me come out," he says. "Because if you do that, you're going to be honest, and if you're honest people will relate to you sharing a real piece of yourself with them. So to do that you have to sort of let go of the wheel and see where the car goes."

Part of that honesty ties in with giving the project his own real name rather than a moniker, something his friend Jerry Cantrell convinced him was the right move. Now, Greg says, he's free to keep growing and evolving as an artist. "It's ownership, integration, control, freedom," he adds. "Stylistically, emotionally, you can go wherever you want with it."

Before Jerry's intervention, *Child Soldier* was set to be the name of the band rather than the title of the album. It came, says Greg, through the process of recovering from his own troubles, and reaching strength on the other side.

"*Child Soldier* came from having to work through things," he says. "Creative people are emotionally sensitive, they've worked through something. You absorb things differently. You have to learn how to live in an insensitive world as a sensitive person, and that's the '*Child Soldier*' bit. And the '*Creator Of God*' element is saying if you make it through that, then you can create your universe. You're God and you created yourself, and we're creating our existence in real time. It's a big collective hallucination, we're imagining our existences into reality. You make it through the struggle and you can be whatever you want, there's no limits to it."

This is, then, a progressive album in the most literal sense. The music has evolved, become even more complex and unpredictable, as its creator gained a deeper understanding of who he is. Fragility, here, is not weakness, it's something to be celebrated – finding strength in accepting your true nature. Honesty, it seems, is not just the best policy – it's essential for a happier life.

"I turned 40 this year, and this whole year for me is about integration and owning every part of me," Greg says, ready to head off into another still and silent LA night. "And I feel like this record is a symbol of that. It's mirroring something that's going on in my personal life where I do feel like completely fine and at ease with who I am. Here it is, here I am, deal with it, don't deal with it, I don't care. It took a long time to get to that point." MH

"I WAS THIS WRECK OF A PERSON"
GREG PUCIATO

***CHILD SOLDIER: CREATOR OF GOD* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 23 VIA FEDERAL PRISONER**

Greg Puciato: soldiering on

BREAKOUT SUCCESS

Greg's teamed up with artist Jesse Draxler for new label Federal Prisoner. Here's what you need to know

WHAT IS IT ABOUT YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH JESSE DRAXLER THAT WORKS SO WELL?
"We had a really instant love-at-first-sight-but-friends thing. This is someone that, normally, I would start a band with or do come kind of musical collaboration with, but he doesn't play music, so this is the growth of that collaboration, the growth of what we were doing with The Black Queen with the video and the artwork. I don't want to do things on my own, it's lonely. So with the label it's exciting to have a partner that I trust 100% creatively, and he pushes me and holds me accountable."

DO YOU SEE THE LABEL AS AN ART PROJECT IN ITS OWN RIGHT?
"Yeah, we really do. It's a creative exercise. It kind of feels the same to me as the band. It feels like me and Jesse have a creative art project together and that just happens to be a record label."

HAVE YOU SIGNED ANYONE YET?
"With the coronavirus thing we can't go to shows and we can't check out bands. But he has a noise compilation called *Reigning Cement*, and it's a 100-page book and a compilation where he took a file of found sound from the outside world and took it to a bunch of different artists like Chelsea Wolfe and Uniform, Full Of Hell ['s Dylan Walker] and a bunch of other people. They could make a song, but they had to use these elements and vocals only. That's the kind of shit I want to do. More art-based and more out-there, not genre-based."

***REIGNING CEMENT* IS OUT NOW. SEE MORE AT WWW.FEDERALPRISONER.COM**

AMARANTHE

CARRY THE FLAME

When her brother died from an overdose, Amaranthe's Elize Ryd vowed to continue the journey into metal that she had started with him. This is her story

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS

PRESS/VILLE JUURIKKALA

AMARANTHE

Amaranthe (left to right): Morten Løwe Sørensen, Olof Mörck, Henrik Englund Wilhelmsson, Elize Ryd, Johan Andreassen, Nils Molin

Elize Ryd grew up in the Swedish Bible Belt in Värnamo, a small, picturesque town dotted with churches, two hours from Gothenburg, where heavy music was the devil. "To be a metal fan was… well, people had their opinions," she says today, chatting animatedly down the phone to *Metal Hammer* as she recalls her journey from Sweden's conservative centre, to genre-hopping melodic metallers Amaranthe.

Despite the outrage of their neighbours, the Ryd family worshipped fervently at the altar of the riff. Elize's father was a hard rock lover who played bass, while her mother was a singer/songwriter who listened to punk. Like most kids, Elize lapped up the pop music and Eurodance she heard on the radio, nurturing the tastes that would go on to inform Amaranthe's dynamic blend of metal, synth pop and euphoric EDM. But it was her older brother and metaller, Johan Carlzon, vocalist in local doom band Abandon, who 'schooled' her in metal and alternative rock.

"The first three years of a baby's life is where you shape that person to what it will become," she says. "I think I listened to more metal growing up than other kinds of music."

When Elize was two years old, Metallica's tourbus skidded off the road, killing bassist Cliff Burton, just a 20-minute drive from her house. Although she was too young to remember the accident, she can recall the impact it had on Johan, who was a massive Metallica fan. From then onwards, he was determined to impress on her the importance of Cliff and the music he had stood for, buying Elize her first metal album – *The Black Album* on cassette – followed by albums by Queen, Kiss and Maiden. "I'm forever grateful that he introduced me to metal," Elize says. "I went to his concerts when I was seven or eight years old, sitting on my mother's shoulders."

Surrounded by music throughout her childhood, Elize quickly set her sights on becoming a singer. In 2004, she enrolled on a three-year course at Gothenburg's Performing Arts School and began laying down guest vocals for local power metallers Falconer and Dreamland. But two years later, things really kicked up a notch when she met Amaranthe's Olof Mörck, then the guitarist in power metal band Dragonland, in a nightclub. "He knew my brother, everyone knew my brother," she says. "He was a local celebrity because he was so great at growling. I think he was impressed I was the little sister of this extreme metal growler."

Olof was just as impressed with Elize's powerful voice, though. And when he heard Nightwish were seeking a new singer to replace Tarja Turunen, who had been fired from the band in 2005, he secretly sent over the tapes of Elize's Dragonland and Falconer guest vocals. "It was the one of the nicest things anyone had ever done for me," laughs Elize. "I was very shy, I would never have sent in my audition tape. He said, 'Let's try and see what happens, and if they don't like it, we start our own band." Much to her shock though, the symphonic giants *were* interested, and responded, asking her to record demo vocals for two tracks, *Nemo* and *I Wish I Had An Angel*.

The gig eventually went to Anette Olzon, who fronted Nightwish from 2007-2012, but although Elize was disappointed, she was far from disheartened by the decision. "That lit up a fire inside of me," she says. "I didn't sing opera and thought, 'Maybe I'm not the best for them', but when they announced Annette as the singer, I got it. They didn't want an opera singer. They were interested in my voice; that meant my voice might not be so wrong for this."

Energised, she and Olaf started recording the material that would go on to be Amaranthe's 2009 EP, *Leave Everything Behind*, but as they were finishing the songs, Elize was dealt a devastating blow; her brother had passed away after an overdose. He was just 32 years old. "It was unconsciously based around making my brother proud," Elize says of her decision to pursue a career in metal. "I wanted to

carry on the legacy of him. I [felt I] was staying in contact with him through the music."

Elize and Olof initially posted the early Amaranthe songs to MySpace, attracting the attention of their first record label, Spinefarm, who signed them in 2010 and released their first five albums. The tracks also grabbed the lugs of power metallers Kamelot, who invited Elize to join them on their 2012 US tour as a backing vocalist – supporting Nightwish. "It was a surreal situation," she says. "I didn't dare remind them of the audition so I don't know if they remembered."

On the evening of September 28 2012, as the tour rolled into Denver, Anette was taken ill and rushed to hospital just a few hours before showtime. With the Ogden Theatre packed with 1,600 expectant fans, Nightwish asked Elize if she would fill in on vocals. "I remembered the songs I recorded for my audition tape, but I wasn't so sure about the other ones," she remembers, revealing she was so nervous she asked Alissa White-Gluz, now current Arch Enemy singer, who was also on the tour providing backing vocals for Kamelot, to join her. The singers had just 55 frantic minutes to learn the setlist, and took to the stage with the lyrics written on sheets of paper. "We were thinking the audience would be very disappointed, but they wanted so bad to hear the band play," she says. "The mood was amazing."

Since then, although Elize is still most comfortable as part of an ensemble – she's one third of a vocal trio in Amaranthe, alongside growler Henrik Englund Wilhelmsson and new recruit, Nils Molin – she's grown in confidence. "We have a superhero theme with the new album [Amaranthe's sixth album, *Manifest*] and this is exactly what it means," she says. "You overcome your fears, you do things you never think you would do, or be able to do."

Sonically too, *Manifest* is the band's most assured effort yet, taking their

"I SAT ON MY MOTHER'S SHOULDERS DURING HIS CONCERTS"

ELIZE RYD

PRESS/ JOHAN CARLEN

Elize has no interest in sounding the same as everyone else

vivid, yet undoubtedly divisive, pop metal to the next level and turning their gigantic hooks and sparkling choruses up to skyscraper levels. And while the purists can sneer, Elize insists the band are bringing something new to the table.

"I haven't heard anyone say it's cheesy," she argues when we ask how fans have reacted to the overblown nature of their music. "We want to give people an endorphin kick. You cannot take music forward if you try and sound the same as everyone else."

Over half a decade of slow burn experimentation, Amaranthe have arrived at a sound that would fit as much competing at Eurovision as it would on the Download Fest line-up. This is perhaps unsurprising, given both Elize and Nils have competed in the competition – Elize in 2015, with opera singer Rickard Söderberg, and Nils in 2011, with his band Dynazty. Neither made the live finals, but Elize agrees it's something Amaranthe would definitely be open to in the future. "People have opinions, [like] you shouldn't sell yourself to 'corporate things', but we are giving people a gift," she enthuses. "If we did Eurovision, we would give people something great they didn't even know existed." H

"WE WANT TO GIVE PEOPLE AN ENDORPHIN KICK"

ELIZE RYD

***MANIFEST* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 2 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST**

"I AM BORED WITH THE MUSIC POLICE!"

Angela Gossow explains why she guested on the environmentally conscious album track *Do Or Die*

WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AMARANTHE?
"I have been their managing director since the end of 2018. It's very different from my musical roots, which are straightforward extreme metal. I am happy to say, I am still very flexible and open-minded – like a kid – when it comes to music. I really got into their crazy mix of extremes – melody, brutality, pop and extreme metal united. Why not? Life is too short to label music, be narrow-minded and restrict art. I am very bored with the music police in this world who judge upon their own limits of taste."

HOW DID YOU END UP ON THE TRACK *DO OR DIE*?
"I have a home studio in my basement and I do practise vocals from time to time because I simply enjoy screaming. I also wanted to bring a new aspect into Amaranthe – they can actually have a direct in-your-face message, it's not just fantasy stories they deal with in their lyrics."

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME OUT OF VOCAL 'RETIREMENT'?
"I never retired from being a vocalist. I just couldn't find the time and the motivation to do it for a couple of years; I wanted to focus on family and management. If you do too many things at the same time, nothing turns out great. I feel very responsible for my bands, so I dedicate a large part of my time and resources to making sure they are doing great in every aspect."

HAVE YOU GOT ANY MORE PLANS IN THE WORKS TO MAKE MUSIC?
"I am really into the idea of recording an old-school death metal album, but it's not on my priority list. So it's eventually gonna happen, just not now. But I am re-releasing my first death metal band, Asmodina, on vinyl, plus all the old demos from Asmodina and Mistress. Costin [Chioreanu] did the artwork. I am donating all proceeds to a charity project that focuses on children and preserving natural environments for them."

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RAMMSTEIN

THE 20 RAMMSTE

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We challenged you lot to pick the greatest Rammstein songs of all time – and you responded in your thousands. Here's 20 of the very best

WORDS: ALEC CHILLINGWORTH
INTRO: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

PRESS:JENS KOCH

With the second round of Rammstein's truly blockbuster Deutschland European tour put on ice due to, well, you know what, we thought we'd cheer you up by demanding you take on an agonisingly impossible task: voting for your favourite Rammstein songs of all time.

More than 18,000 of you got stuck in to give us your picks, so may we present the 20 most popular fire-breathing, knee-smacking, baby-exploding Rammstein bangers of them all, as voted for by you. Strap in…

20. RAMMSTEIN (Herzeleid, 1995)

Wollt Ihr Das Bett In Flammen Sehen? may have been the first song on *Herzeleid*, but *Rammstein* is the first song the band ever wrote. Based on the Ramstein air show disaster from which they take their name, it's suitably moody, sinister and bass-heavy – it's a perfect encapsulation of the band's influences, from White Zombie to Depeche Mode. And no, it doesn't matter that it's the second song on the album to feature a hook simply bearing the word 'Rammstein'. It sounds ace.

19. PUPPE (Rammstein, 2019)

Till Lindemann suffers for his art. He's what your aunt would call 'a character'. This is the man who drilled an actual hole in his cheek to achieve that illuminated mouth effect in *Ich Tu Dir Weh*'s music video, yet *Puppe* is Till pushing further than he's ever gone before. Backed just by crashing cymbals through the first chorus, he screams, and it is utterly unhinged. Primal. Sure, he did some harsh vocals for *Reise, Reise*'s *Stein Um Stein*, but nothing like this. It's bloody raw, and marks the tipping point in Rammstein's seventh album: the first five tracks were just non-stop bangers, then *Puppe* turns up to the party, unplugs the sound-system and starts weeping. Actually nightmarish.

18. SEHNSUCHT (Sehnsucht, 1997)

The title track and opening burst from album Nummer zwei, *Sehnsucht* remains one of the giddiest songs in Rammstein's live set today. You can trace that focal, pounding riff back to Richard's pre-Rammstein band, Orgasm Death Gimmick, and those keyboards 35 seconds in must have been lifted from a *Tekken* game. By the time you get to the gang vocal of *'SEHNSUCHT!'*, you're pretty much guaranteed to have Till Hammered yourself into the ground. Mighty as it comes, that bit.

So youthful… and so wonderfully wrong they can only ever be right

17. ROSENROT (Rosenrot, 2005)

For a band who are often accused of just nicking Ministry songs and shouting German over them, they've got an awful lot of gentler tunes – and good ones, at that. And while *Rosenrot* isn't a ballad in the sense that it ends with a riff chunky enough to sink a ship, it's another of those yearning tales of unrequited love that Till does so well (with a little help from literary lad Goethe, whose Heidenröslein poem informs the lyrics). This was supposed to end up on *Reise, Reise*, but the band believed in it so much, they wanted it to be a single and there just wasn't the room. Probably a wise move, then, given the aforementioned final riff is that exact same as the finale of *Stein Um Stein*, also from *Reise, Reise*.

PRESS/JOACHIM GERN.

16. AMERIKA
(Reise, Reise, 2004)

Sometimes, it's nice to just be silly. *Amerika* is silly – its singalong chorus, a dead ringer for The Sounds' *Living In America*, is infectious. Instantaneous. Kids can sing it, so can your nanna. *'Coca-Cola, sometimes war'* perhaps doesn't seem like a single-worthy lyric from a band famed for BDSM imagery, but Rammstein have always been a bit extra; Flake's keyboard solo is so outrageous, he used to play it live while riding a Segway around the stage. That is, until he accidentally knackered Till's knee when he drove into him, forcing the band to cancel several dates in 2005.

15. RADIO
(Rammstein, 2019)

They covered *The Model* two decades prior, but *Radio* sees Rammstein go whole-hog, *Radioactivity* -era Kraftwerk with the synth and, in particular, the tapered-down penultimate chorus. Still, it's Rammstein – Christoph makes a 4/4 beat sound like it's something he just came up with, and Till's drawn-out *'Raaaaaadio'* through the final refrain is truly special stuff. And that's before you even get to the lyrical gubbins, which examine the censorship of Western music, art and culture by the German Democratic Republic – something the members of Rammstein lived through behind the Berlin Wall.

14. ADIOS
(Mutter, 2001)

Mutter's first half is packed full of singles, and *Adios*'s back-end placement within the album absolutely does not reflect its quality. *That* guitar solo – it's hands-down the catchiest instrumental break they've recorded, sitting inside the fastest Rammstein song to date, Christoph's drums running behind Till's wails in an effort to keep up. That the band haven't played this song live since 2002 is downright criminal.

13. KEINE LUST
(Reise, Reise, 2004)

For a song with lyrics as apathetic as this (*'Ich habe keine Lust mich nicht zu hassen, hab' keine Lust mich anzufassen'* roughly translates to 'I don't feel like not hating myself, don't feel like touching myself'), *Keine Lust* sure is fun. It's got one of those rolling, almost carnival-esque choruses not too dissimilar to *Haifisch*, driven along by Christoph's beats before the meaty riffs swoop back for the verses. The breakdown's a right heavy bastard, too. Nothing fancy – just a top-tier example of Rammstein chugging away.

12. LINKS 2 3 4
(Mutter, 2001)

Since *Herzeleid*, Rammstein had been accused of having far-right sympathies. *Links 2 3 4* refutes that in the most Rammstein fashion possible. Flanked by the sound of marching boots, Till's militaristic commands translate to *'My heart beats to the left, 2-3-4'*: this being lifted from *Einheitsfrontlied*, a song written by playwright Bertolt Brecht in 1934 to rally Germany's communist and social democrat parties against the Nazis. Like the band's biggest singles (don't worry, we're getting to those very soon), *Links 2 3 4*'s success lies in its apparent simplicity. You can sing it back the very first time you hear it, you can bang your head to it, and there's ample chance to just scream vowels when you run out of stock German words to say.

"Let's go to work..."

PRESS/OLAF HEINE.

11. OHNE DICH
(Reise, Reise, 2004)

Originally cooked up for inclusion on *Mutter*, this symphonic-tinged dirge didn't cut the mustard, as the band didn't fancy any more ballads. But fast-forward to *Reise, Reise*, and the more earthy aesthetic suits *Ohne Dich* to the ground. The strings, stirring the intensity every time Paul and Richard break through with the electrics; Till's romantic cries of *'Ohne dich kann ich nicht sein'* ('I cannot be without you') accentuated by that gorgeous, uncanny mandolin. Spectacular. A reminder, if one were needed, that Rammstein are so much more than a one-trick pony. ▶

10. MUTTER (Mutter, 2001)

A man in his late 30s, screaming for his mum with the voice of Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Kindergarten Cop*, should be hilarious. But *Mutter* is not hilarious. It's heart-breaking. The mid-tempo, lullaby balladry of the verses details a child crying out to be loved, something that feels particularly sobering when you consider Richard's strained relationship with his mother when he was young. Those guitar lines through the chorus should be triumphant, but the way they weave underneath Till's vocals, how they play against the orchestration – it's just deeply sad. Everything about it's sad, right down to the guitar solo.

9. DU REICHST SO GUT (Herzeleid, 1995)

Throughout this list, Rammstein have more than proven they can do emotion. They can do sensitive. But ultimately, this is Rammstein. They're known for their overblown, hyper-masculine take on industrial metal. Even on their debut, *Du Riechst So Gut* had all the boxes ticked. Christoph's got that 4/4 stomp nailed, the guitar solo's a joy to listen to every time, and Flake's keys play the foil to Till's booming baritone. That warped, subversive lyrical aspect is also covered, inspired by Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume: The Story Of A Murderer*, chronicling a man who kills teenage girls and captures their scent. This was Rammstein's first ever single – imagine a band coming along nowadays and the first thing you hear is of the depth and quality of *Du Riechst So Gut*. Mad.

8. MEIN TEIL (Reise, Reise, 2004)

Mein Teil opens with Rammstein's most bestial riff to date, so the subject matter seems rather appropriate. You know it. Armin Meiwes. German chap. Went on the internet in 2001, looking for voluntary victims to be cannibalised – he found one. Till's nasal verses are enough to give Vin Diesel the willies, laying the foundations for that explosive *'Denn! Du bist! Was! Du isst!'* ('Because you are what you eat') just before the chorus. The eerie choirs and discordant guitar solo are genuinely jarring, yet *Mein Teil* shot

These *Du Hast* masks will never not make us extremely uncomfortable

to No.2 in the German singles chart and remains a spectacle of pantomime proportions during the Rammstein live show.

7. ICH TU DIR WEH (Liebe Ist Für Alle Da, 2009)

Liebe Ist Für Alle Da is a heavy album, swapping more of the techno-tinged stuff for creepier keys and forehead-caving riffs. *Ich Tu Dir Weh* has that in spades, but it's also packing an oddly velveteen refrain from Till – he almost sounds angelic, well, were it not for the fact that the line he's singing translates to *'I hurt you, I am not sorry'*. The violent overtones of the lyrics, paired with *LIFAD*'s graphic cover art, resulted in the record being 'indexed' for six months in Germany: basically, it was only available behind the counter and you had to be at least 18 years old to buy it. Rammstein had this decision overturned, and then *sued the actual government* for lost sales on the album.

6. ICH WILL (Mutter, 2001)

Much like *Links 2 3 4*, *Ich Will* works because it seems dead simple. And again, much like *Links 2 3 4*, *Ich Will*'s verses comprise mainly of the title being rasped by Till, Christoph's boisterous bass drum keeping everything in line. He's an exceptional drummer, and his ability to just make a simple beat seem like a work of genius is something that's often mistaken for laziness – go listen to that sneaky little fill before the final chorus and try saying it's a cop-out. You can't. The question/answer of Till and the 'crowd' is electrifying, priming itself for the live environment. Even Flake's keyboards, which should, by all accounts, sound completely incongruous given their levity here, only serve the song and make it even more accomplished.

5. ENGEL (Sehnsucht, 1997)

Sehnsucht is what turned Rammstein from local curios to certified legends in their home country, and *Engel* can take a bow and claim a large part of the credit. Released as the album's first single, it instantly stands out as just being *more* than Herzeleid. More sophisticated in its integration of electronics, no matter how cheesy they could sound if played by anyone other than Flake; more theatrical, by virtue of Till's voice becoming more richly developed, especially during that isolated moment, *'Gott weiß, ich will kein Engel sein'* ('God knows I don't want to be an angel'); more willing to put its neck out and experiment, opening with just a whistled melody and roping in German singer Bobo to lather up those saccharine lines – the ones you used to hear on backing track when the band played it live.

4. MEIN HERZ BRENNT (Mutter, 2001)

With *Mutter*, Rammstein started to sound a lot more… serious. The heft, the muscle, the precision all solidifies on this record, and *Mein Herz Brennt* is the introduction. As the album begins, you know you're in for something different. Something new. The strings slither under the

PRESS/OLAF HENIE.

surface, Till's voice bubbling over the boil as he shouts *'Mein Herz brennt!'* ('My heart is burning'). The orchestration properly kicks in, delivering a tune so gargantuan, it's been used in a Mercedes Benz advert. By far and away the most interesting one-note guitar riff in existence, too.

3. DU HAST
(Sehnsucht, 1997)

The thudding, call-and-response genius of Rammstein's breakthrough 1997 single is their *Smells Like Teen Spirit*: you never need to hear it again, but you're glad when you do. It's the song that broke them in North America, the song that's remained a staple in their live set no matter what, and the song that does the big boy numbers on Spotify. *Du Hast*'s merciless, watertight drumbeat supports a riff reminiscent of Ministry's *Just One Fix*, but less heroin-y; Till's rich, bassy voice juxtaposes Flake's cheeky, video-games-meet-goth-club synthesisers across the song's four-minute duration. It's heavy. It's catchy. A dancefloor-filler. Verse, chorus, verse; in, out, done. Banger.

2. DEUTSCHLAND
(Rammstein, 2019)

The wait had been agonising. Eight years without original material. No album on the horizon. Then, on a cold March evening, the video for *Deutschland* arrived. A potted history of Germany's triumphs and ills, smushed together in a cinematic smorgasbord of perversity – it had the brutality and brains to titillate and terrify in equal measure. Like all the best Rammstein tracks, the chorus is just one word: *'Deutschland'*. Something you can shout in a festival field, in your house, in the shower. This is the only song on *Rammstein* to feature Richard's vocals, and as a result, they're an intriguing flavour, peppering Flake's spiky keyboard loops and that impervious, rock-hard spine laid down by the drums and bass. Twenty-five years on, and Rammstein could still turn up out of nowhere, cause just as much – if not more – controversy as before, and top it all off with a shit-hot tune.

"Anyone seen Snow White?"

PRESS/ERIK HACKENSCHMIDT

1. SONNE
(Mutter, 2001)

Sonne isn't a traditional Rammstein song. Rather than deliver Till Hammer-worthy thrills, its original aim was to actually hype people up; its birth can be traced back to the year 2000, when the band were asked to write a song for Ukrainian boxer (and now politician) Vitali Klitschko, who needed a new song to accompany him to the ring. He ultimately passed on *Sonne*, but no matter – it fits snuggly between *Links 2 3 4* and *Ich Will*, providing a moment of epic excess on an album that, to be honest, was excessive enough before you even get to the music, given the controversial cover art featuring a dead foetus. Till's pitch-black, melancholy delivery of the line *'Hier kommt die Sonne'* ('Here comes the sun') turns something that should be optimistic into a funeral march. The depths of sorrow. The fucking dirt. *Sonne*'s widescreen misery is always a highlight live, especially given the extended treatment it's afforded. On record, it ends with those sampled, high-pitched warbles. In concert, the band return for one more go, Richard and Paul letting their notes ring out as flames engulf everything. It's jaw-dropping, and just before you think it can't get any more intense, they tear through that three-note riff one last time, just to show you they *can*. It might not be your stereotypical Rammstein song, but according to *Metal Hammer*'s readers, it's the best. Hard to disagree with that.

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Mr. Bungle: still as edgy as ever

MR. BUNGLE

The Raging Wrath Of The Easter Bunny Demo

IPECAC

The return of Mike Patton's mental metal mothership

WORSHIPPED AND ADORED in a way that most bands are not, Mr. Bungle only released three studio albums during their remorselessly mischievous and leftfield existence. But what albums they were. 1991's self-titled debut was a dizzying, multi-genre cartoon metal extravaganza that fizzed with anarchic exuberance and bulged with brilliant ideas; 1995's *Disco Volante* took a bewildering but enthralling left turn into experimental art rock, surrealism and abstract noise; while 1999's *California* combined all of the above with razor-sharp pop hooks and lashings of woozy romanticism. Still best known as the band Mike Patton was fronting when he was frogmarched toward fame and fortune with Faith No More, Mr. Bungle were a bit special. They dispersed 20 years ago, in myriad directions to make vast quantities of weird and wonderful music under innumerable different names. Few thought they would ever return. But as if to prove that 2020 isn't a total shitshow, they're back, albeit sounding entirely unlike any of their revered albums.

BRILLIANTLY OFF-BEAM, BUT CRUSHING LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Instead, this is yet another glorious thrash metal record, in a year full of them.

For those unfamiliar with Bungle history, *The Raging Wrath Of The Easter Bunny* was the band's opulent first cassette demo, released when the Californians were, in essence, a snotty young thrash metal band with a nascent taste for complexity and lyrical perversity. Diehard fans have long pored over the sonically shaky original, and those early stabs will always retain a certain anarchic charm, but this newly recorded version of those songs loudly seeks to give Mr. Bungle's first rotten fruits the attention, precision and sonic values that they deserve.

Sensibly, original members Mike Patton (vocals), Trey Spruance (guitar) and Trevor

18+

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Dunn (bass) have recruited two thrash icons to complete a new line-up: Scott Ian and Dave Lombardo, the genre's most righteous rhythm guitarist and revered drummer respectively. Unsurprisingly, this rips harder than 99% of every thrash record you've ever heard. It's also frequently hard to tell who is more excited to be here; Scott and Dave's shit-eating grins are effectively audible from explosive, two-minute opener proper *Anarchy Up Your Anus* onwards, while the original Bungle trio can hardly believe their luck, as these 35-year-old songs are reborn as the destructive metal monoliths they were (presumably) intended to be back in 1986.

It's all steeped in the hard-as-nails technicality of Slayer, Dark Angel and Possessed, but thanks to Mike Patton's mercurial presence and that tirelessly pulverising Scott Ian/Dave Lombardo axis, everything from cult favourites *Raping Your Mind* and *Bungle Grind* through to the previously unreleased *Methematics* (featuring *that* riff from *Love Is A Fist*, Bungle fans!) emanates the same sense of subversive glee that made the wide-eyed experimentation of later material so irresistible. There is even room for a raging cover of Corrosion Of Conformity's *Loss For Words* – a blistering salute to another revolutionary band from the mid-80s.

As brilliantly off-beam as ever but crushing like never before, Mr. Bungle have turned a noble but nostalgic exercise into one of 2020's most exhilarating metal records. Heroes.

FOR FANS OF: Slayer, Anthrax, Fantômas

DOM LAWSON

PRESS/ERIC LARSEN

AMIENSUS
Abreaction
TRANSCENDING

Minnesota's progressive BM adventurers carve out more territory

This progressive black metal collective have carved out a reputation for being risk takers for nigh-on a decade. Sounding more robust than ever after years on the road, their third record sees the pigeonhole-phobic quintet push the envelope a little more as they sprinkle some Alice In Chains-esque melodies (*Beneath The Waves*) and Bad Seeds-minded strings (*Divinity*) into the pot. Although some of the material starts to get a little samey, when these sonic adventurers get their recipe just right, as on the melodic yet menacing epic that is *A Convocation Of Spirits*, the results are very tasty indeed.

FOR FANS OF: Opeth, Trautonist, Abigail Williams

EDWIN MCFEE

ARMORED SAINT
Punching The Sky
METAL BLADE

John Bush-fronted hard rock veterans still scaling the heights

As the missing link between thrash and hard rock during the 80s, Armored Saint were nicknamed "the headbangingest band in LA". They're the group from which Anthrax prised John Bush after he turned down Metallica. On those grounds, this eighth album carries big expectations, and *Punching The Sky* matches such a billing. While the Bush roar remains unmistakable as ever, *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants*, *End Of The Attention Span* and the riff-tastic *Do Wrong To None* are big, meaty, powerful, hook-laden and as rambunctious as any long-term fan will have hoped. Dizzy Reed from Guns N' Roses adds some keyboard colour, though it's a minor distraction amid tidal waves of guitar-driven raunch.

FOR FANS OF: Anthrax, Metal Church, Anvil

DAVE LING

BRIQUEVILLE
Quelle
PELAGIC

Metronomic miserablism from Belgian post-metallers

At the heart of Briqueville lies a contradiction: how can a band so minimalistic simultaneously create art so multi-dimensional? The answer lies in a combination of stark aesthetics and metronomic instrumentals, creating a sensory experience both emotionally driven and atmospherically rich. The droning feedback opening *Akte VIII* comes straight from the Swans playbook, swallowing you whole while the music expands out exponentially amidst an ocean of noise. Early on, tar-like glacial riffs mostly drown the band's melodic tendencies; by *Akte X* the balance flips and lighter tones take prominence. These shades of Kyuss-ish stargazing and Eastern-sounding notes à la Led Zeppelin offer brief respite – a gasp of air before being sucked inexorably back into the sludgy abjection below.

FOR FANS OF: Hemelbestormer, Astodan, The Ocean

RICH HOBSON

Anaal Nathrakh: still enjoying watching the world burn

ANAAL NATHRAKH

Endarkenment

METAL BLADE

Birmingham's blackened grind doomsayers clean up their act

AFTER 20 YEARS, Brummie noise-mongers Anaal Nathrakh's 11th record embraces a slightly cleaner, brighter sound than usual. Whilst the duo have always been keen to watch the world burn, now that it finally is, they sound rather pleased with themselves, forgoing much of their earlier nihilism for a more victorious vibe.

Don't worry, this is still Nathrakh we're talking about and the grinding *Thus, Always, To Tyrants* and blistering, blackened onslaught *Beyond Words* are just as filthy and mindfuckingly abrasive as you'd expect, but tracks like the stirring *Create Art, Though The World May Perish* have a far more triumphant and curiously optimistic quality, emphasising galloping Iron Maiden-esque guitar harmonies and soaring clean vocals. The gruesomely titled *Libidinous (A Pig With Cocks In Its Eyes)*, meanwhile, alternates between bouncy, djent-esque grooves and bombastic, arena-sized melodeath riffage, seasoned with glass-shattering King Diamond-style falsetto.

Unfortunately, this subtle change in tone doesn't fully mask how formulaic the band's sound has become over the last few albums. Granted, it's a formula no one else is using and they still sound nothing like their peers, but the spontaneous, chaotic quality of their earlier work has now been wholly replaced by a more rigid, mechanical approach, with many of the big melodic choruses feeling shoehorned in out of a sense of duty rather than imaginative songwriting – the jarring, histrionic title track being a prime culprit. The most effective tracks here are the ones that eschew the blast-chorus-blast-chorus-breakdown template entirely, like the genuinely epic closer, *Requiem*, which bolsters the band's signature blackened grind with vast choir swells before giving way to an unexpectedly mournful doomy outro.

Endarkenment is still a solid, reliably brutal offering, but it would be good to see Anaal Nathrakh challenging themselves more and exploring these more unconventional structures in the future.

FOR FANS OF: Akercocke, Slugdge, Emperor

KEZ WHELAN

BENEDICTION

Scriptures

NUCLEAR BLAST

Birmingham's death metal legends casually obliterate all-comers

Nearly 30 years on from the release of their seminal debut, *Subconscious Terror*, Benediction have created the finest album of their career. With vocalist Dave Ingram back onboard and a new rhythm section propelling their defiantly old-school sound forward, *Scriptures* ripples with absurd levels of intensity and verve. Every last song on the Brummies' eighth full-length is a freshly minted death metal classic, built from the same primitive materials that guitarists Peter Rew and Darren Brookes have employed from the start, but they're somehow sharper and more precise in execution than ever before. As an added treat, *Scriptures* sounds fucking incredible; from murderous single *Rabid Carnality* to the dark, twisted *Neverwhen*, death metal has seldom sounded so vast or thrilling.

FOR FANS OF: Memoriam, Massacre, Unleashed

DOM LAWSON

BISMUT

Retrocausality

LAY BARE RECORDINGS

Instrumental Dutch sludge/psych trio take the long route

There are innumerable memes about bassists being redundant in metal bands, so it's nice to hear Bismut offer a riposte. Huibert der Weduwen's ebb and flow has a real touch of Tool's Justin Chancellor; he's the beating heart of the band's second record, driving the conversation whenever it begins to linger. And linger it does. At 72 minutes, *Retrocausality*'s instrumental, progressive sludginess can hold onto a leitmotif too long, but when they deliver those meaty riffs on *Oscuramento*; when they build to that frenzied crescendo at *Varasaga's* 10-minute mark; when *Vergangenheit*'s dizzying riffs initially unfurl, it's spinetingling stuff. If this album was 30 minutes shorter, it would be unforgettable.

FOR FANS OF: Tool, Mastodon, Elder

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

BLOODBATHER

Silence

RISE

Metallic hardcore agitators give the short, sharp shock treatment

Floridian duo Bloodbather make a metallic hardcore racket with a razor-sharp industrial edge that recalls the likes of Code Orange, .gif from god and Vein. Whilst they're not in the same league just yet, *Silence* is a mightily impressive 15 minutes of furious, down-tuned riffs and atonal guitar squeals, all the more impressive considering it's only their second release. Bloodbather may lack the complexity of some of their peers but they make up for it in uncompromising aggression. Vocalist Kyler Millo's screams are throat-shredding throughout, whilst the melodic undertones on *Erase* bode well for a potentially more dynamic future full-length.

FOR FANS OF: Code Orange, Vein, Jesus Piece

REMFRY DEDMAN

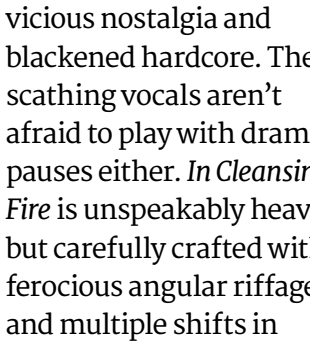
CHAMBER
Cost Of Sacrifice
PURE NOISE

Nashville nihilists burrow into the darkest depths of hardcore

Chamber's nihilistic full-length debut sits somewhere between *Iowa*-era Slipknot and Jesus Piece. Opener *Fracture*'s bile-soaked vocals and thunderous grooves wrestle vicious nostalgia and blackened hardcore. The scathing vocals aren't afraid to play with dramatic pauses either. *In Cleansing Fire* is unspeakably heavy but carefully crafted with ferocious angular riffage and multiple shifts in tempo while the slower-paced *Disassemble Reassemble* still finds scope for punishment as it lurches menacingly between unsettling blasts and feedback-drenched primal screams. It's a stellar effort from an uncompromising and rightly confident-sounding band.

FOR FANS OF: Year Of The Knife, Dying Wish, Jesus Piece

SOPHIE MAUGHAN



ALFONSO CORACE
Fo's Room
SELF-RELEASED

Wide-reaching solo album from well-travelled Italian muso

Alfonso Corace is a Rome-based multi-instrumentalist most notable for playing guitar with the grindcore band Airlines Of Terror, though he also pounds the skins and/or plays guitar for The Foreshadowing and many more. Stepping out alone – for the most part – Alfonso has sought to make music free of any obvious connection to his past, or indeed "stylistic restraints". So it's no surprise that from the symphonic-sounding sludge of opener *Serenity* to the melodic metal of *Isolation* and the electronically charged *Control*, no two songs sound alike. While drums and percussion, bass, guitars, keys and 'vocals' (Alfonso is hardly a gifted singer, hence the prodigious, rather irritating reliance upon vocoders) all supplied by the record's creator, singer Elisabetta Marchetti and flautist Maria Luisa Peliti contribute its more gothic elements. File under 'interesting experiment'.

FOR FANS OF: Paradise Lost, Ghost, Anathema

DAVE LING

CROSS BRINGER
The Signs Of Spiritual Delusion
CONSOULING SOUNDS

Blackened hardcore crew chart a course through chaos

Featuring members from Russia and Belgium, Cross Bringer's mission is to steer a path through our current state of psychological and social uncertainty, in the hope of regaining our intrinsic bearings. Melding fevered hardcore with the momentum of black metal, their debut album generates a ferocious heat through venomous vocals and jagged riffs. *The Signs Of Spiritual Delusion* starts with the soft, post-metal of *Prayer*, although the tension is quickly heightened when *The Battle Of The Weak* reverberates with tangible aggression. *Supplication – Sacrament* barrels forwards on off-kilter rhythms woven with dread-laden, dissonant guitars while *Torture Incantation*'s chaotic rhythms and relentless screams reach a state of towering delirium. That infernal pressure barely leaves pause for breath during this disturbing journey through disillusion and anxiety, leaving you breathless even after the final cries have faded.

FOR FANS OF: Downfall Of Gaia, Light Bearer, Birds In A Row

CHERYL CARTER

DAUFØDT
1000 Island
FYSISK FORMAT

Explosive Nordic metal punks give the new decade a dressing down

Norway's at it again. Kvelertak slapped the teeth out of the previous decade with their self-titled 2010 debut album, and now it's time for Dauføt to take 2020 to the dentist. *1000 Island* is a scabrous debut that's equally catchy and caustic; for every shit-kicking punk tune like *Ingenmannsland* or *4536 Liberstad*, you've got nigh-on noise rock freak-outs in the form of *Kulturaven* and the Code Orange-slurring-after-a-few-pints *Den Hurtigste Af 200 Millioner Sædceller*. The record's relentless hand claps, gang vocals, rock'n'roll licks and shimmying rhythms are all strung together by Annika Linn Verdal Homme; her screams are so raw, they'd give Gordon Ramsay an aneurysm. Although you do get occasional blasts of atonal, black metal-tinged extremity à la Kvelertak, *1000 Island* never scrimps on hooks or heft. Daufødt are raw power. That this is their debut is obscene.

FOR FANS OF: Dwarves, Kvelertak, The Distillers

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

Auðn find the culprit for their photoshoot idea

AUÐN
Vökudraumsins Fangi
SEASON OF MIST

Iceland's atmospheric black metallers cleave to the elements

HAMMER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH the six-man black metal force that is Auðn began in 2015, as part of a panel of judges on the Icelandic leg of the Wacken metal battle. Devout exponents of 90s extremity, they put in an impassioned performance but finished second, returning a year later to win. Such dedication has seen the band endure amidst a firmly established and respected local scene; Iceland is notorious for producing some of the most potent modern black metal there is. Many of their countrymen meddle nefariously on the precipice of the unknown, conjuring dissonant, experimental realms. Auðn's traditionalism sets them apart as committed exponents of accessible and balefully melodious tremolo-picked fury.

Album three, *Vökudraumsins Fangi* ('Prisoner Of The Daydream'), continues in that vein. *Einn Um Alla Tíð*'s stirring acoustic intro ratchets up to a scathing assault, with the heralding scream of vocalist Hjalti Sveinsson showing impressive range as he undulates with the music from sorrow to apoplexy. *Birtan Hugann Brennir* is a slow burner, its occasional bursts of pace ravaging an otherwise stirring expanse of smouldering riffs and spinetingling leads.

So far, so Auðn. *Drepsótt*'s imperious start-stop opening returns for an electrifying chorus, while *Horfin Mér* best represents their aplomb for composing cold, spellbinding melodies that entwine ashen, excoriating aural assaults. *Ljóstýra* and the title track make for relatively delicate closing chapters, wandering dreamlike through rousing soundscapes doubtless inspired by visions of their majestic homeland. Blackened new ground forged in volcanic fire, it is an at times alien, frostbitten realm of outstanding natural beauty that Auðn capture, but in a manner that is comparatively conservative to their peers. Inarguably, each successive record further hones their confidently executed and powerful formula, but it is one that would benefit from some volcanic activity of its own.

FOR FANS OF: Uada, Wiegedood, Misþyrming

TOM O'BOYLE

Devildriver: still far from jaded after two decades

DEVILDRIVER
Dealing With Demons I
NAPALM

Dez Fafara's groove metal machine recharges its fighting spirit

OVER THE PAST two decades, Devildriver have cemented their status as contemporary metal heavyweights. Their musical arsenal is seemingly impervious to shifting trends and shot through with the kind of resilience many would deem alien given the turbulence this Californian groove machine have encountered. With the cynics forever lurking in the wings, the release of 2016's *Trust No One* would also mark their first album since the departures of drummer John Boecklin and guitarist-cum-songwriter Jeff Kendrick, not to mention frontman Dez Fafara's sojourn with Coal Chamber.

Fast forward four years and the liner notes for this first part of a double album reveal a continued slew of personal trials and tribulations – from Dez's wife's cancer battle to the ongoing pandemic – but, as *Dealing With Demons I* confirms, he's always had the music to back up his determination. Opener *Keep Away From Me* is fit to burst with the type of skyscraping, twin-guitar assaults that have typified Devildriver at their exhilarating best, with Dez's belligerent delivery as confrontational as ever. The seething mass of mutated death metal grooves that lacerate the furious *Nest Of Vipers* unapologetically raids the senses.

As opening statements go it's impossible to find fault, but if you're still not convinced then pit-friendly anthem *Witches* and *The Damned Don't Cry*'s skilful yet insanely catchy fusion of riffs and punchy rhythms perfectly lay the base for Dez's caustic screams, before the title track's bruising percussive might sets everything up for a rousing chorus.

Even when the band change gears on *Iona*'s slower, hulking descent and dabble with eerie cleans elsewhere, *Dealing With Demons I* represents a vital and violent clearing of the emotional decks for Devildriver, who, even after 20 years, radiate the kind of energy many younger bands can only sniff at.

FOR FANS OF: **Lamb Of God, Machine Head, Trivium**

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

DRACONIAN
Under A Godless Veil
NAPALM

Sweden's revered gloom-mongers find new depths of glory

Exactly five years on from the release of the critically acclaimed *Sovran*, gothic doom pioneers Draconian raise the bar once again, inspired by gnostic cosmology and the story of Sophia, the goddess of wisdom. Heike Langhans' bewitching vocals are pushed even more to the fore as the band spread their musical wings further, at times tipping a cap to the ethereal soundscapes of Cocteau Twins (*Burial Fields*) and post-rock (*Sleepwalkers*). The doom-laden funeral march *The Sacrificial Flame* is a stunning slow-burner and the gloomy cinematic brooder *Night Visitor* could reverberate across the wider metal world and beyond.

FOR FANS OF: **My Dying Bride, Chelsea Wolfe, Katatonia**

EDWIN MCFEE

DROPDEAD
Dropdead
ARMAGEDDON

Powerviolence pioneers return without missing a beat

It's been 22 years since Dropdead's last full-length, but given the seething energy and righteous vitriol radiating off this new effort, you'd be forgiven for mistaking it for an old recording. The quartet's razor-sharp, sub-minute blasts of furious hardcore punk riffing, skin-flaying beats and political lyrics are more vital and incendiary than ever, thanks to a Kurt Ballou production that really captures the band's live intensity. Bob Otis's distinctive vocals are noticeably hoarser and less forceful than his shrill screeches of yore, but the his passionate, articulate lyrics have never sounded clearer, taking aim at the rise of fascism on the blistering *Stoking The Flame* and organised religion on the lumbering, moshpit-inciting *Book Of Hate*.

FOR FANS OF: **Despise You, Siege, Lack Of Interest**

KEZ WHELAN

DYSTOPIA
Geen Weg Out
WOLVES OF HADES

Dutch black metallers range far beyond brass tacks

Dystopia's follow-up to the expansive black metal of 2017's *Chaos Philosophorum* is an even more ambitious affair. From the title ('No Way Out') to vocalist Dennis Onsia's desperate howl, the record is a maze of mental anguish structured as three movements. *Razernij: I* moves organically from extreme tumult to the cosmically contemplative. *Van De Meute Vervreemd: I* slowly prepares for war, with swelling trumpet and trombone as other instruments stir, exploding in extreme frustration across parts *II-IV*. Such boldly prominent use of brass takes the Dutchmen's progressive leanings and adds grandiose depth, underpinning chaos with a baritone swell that elevates it from a good black metal record to a coming-of-age must-listen.

FOR FANS OF: **Ihsahn, Wolves In The Throne Room, Fluisteraars**

TOM O'BOYLE

PRESS/STEPHANIE CABRAL

THE ERKONAUTS
I Want It To End
SELF-RELEASED

Progressive Swiss rockers keep a load of grit in their gears

If you can imagine Motörhead going in a more progressive direction, then you'll have some idea of where this Swiss band are heading on their third album. Very much the brainchild of bassist/vocalist Ales Campanelli this is a dark, intense album, with not all of the current band line-up being featured. What is presented is diverse and captivating. At times, it's chaotic and cluttered, as on *The Curse Of Scotland*. Occasionally, as with *Caravaggio*, it's beautifully acoustic, and there are moments when the music explodes in a thrash fury, such as on *War Flamingoes*, but there's a cohesive groove holding it together, ensuring I *Want To End It All* is never less than engaging. This album marks out The Erkonauts, or more specifically Ales Campanelli, as a vital musical force on the progressive metal map.

FOR FANS OF: Cult Of Luna, Gojira, Mastodon

MALCOLM DOME

EYES
Underperformer
INDISCIPLINARIAN

Danish hardcore debutants set their sights high

The debut album from Danish self-confessed "hardcore fusionists" Eyes is certainly promising, although it doesn't quite match their undoubted ambition. Over the course of 10 tracks there are more than enough nods to legendary punk and hardcore acts, from Big Black on the bulging bass of *Voiceswhispersecretsand-speakonlytruths*, to Converge on the scabrous *Choke* and Refused on… well, pretty much everything. It's all delivered with alongside a healthy dose of Scandic rock'n'roll that gives *Underperformer* a dizzyingly exciting edge, but there is a little too much reliance on killing you with a single riff on a few too many of the songs. When they flex their dynamic muscles to the full, as on the closing rollercoaster of *Crutches*, Eyes are absolutely stunning. *Underperformer* is good, but the signs are there that they're capable of better.

FOR FANS OF: Refused, Every Time I Die, Bastions

STEPHEN HILL

FOUR STROKE BARON
Monoqueen
PROSTHETIC

Reno, Nevada prog heads get under the covers

When an album opens with a cover of an obscure Canadian screed against antisemitism – as in Red Rider's 1981 single, *Lunatic Fringe* – then you know you're in for an interesting time. Reno, Nevada's Four Stroke Baron have made a modest name for themselves by blending the density of metal, the complexity of prog and the plastic bounce of new wave; *Monoqueen* adheres to this formula throughout. There are five other covers on this stopgap release, the most effective being their takes on Chvrches' *Lungs* (oddly moving), *Burning Skies* by Tones On Tail (eerie), *Mean Mr. Mustard* by the Beatles (rollicking) and *Why A Bitch Gotta Lie* by Death Grips (thunderous). The four tracks of original material are more engrossing however, in particular the planetary rumble of *Lowly Argonaut*.

FOR FRANS OF: Intronaut, Torche, Frost

JOSEPH STANNARD

GARGOYL
Gargoyl
SEASON OF MIST

Revocation and Ayahuasca members join forces

Dave Davidson continues to puncture the parameters of death metal with his band Revocation, but the maestro guitarist evidently has several musical avenues left to pursue. Gargoyl sees him hook up with Ayahuasca's guitarist/vocalist Luke Roberts for an unusual and ambitious amalgam of grunge rock and angularity, where the soaring melodies of Alice In Chains seek footing over off-kilter Voivod-like time signatures and side-winding Gorguts-inspired riff roughage. The combination of these seemingly conflicting styles works best on *Nightmare Conspiracy*, where Davidson's mutant blues arpeggios (imagine Revocation meets The Jesus Lizard) tumble headlong into a paranoia-inducing, yet equally contagious, chorus. But such standout moments are rare, and the indebtedness of grunge to the blandest formalities of 1970s arena rock too often take hold, with Roberts' incessant Layne Staley-isms particularly culpable. Time for these guys to ratchet up the weirdness.

FOR FANS OF: Alice in Chains, Opeth, Voivod

SPENCER GRADY

SMALL MERCIES
Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

CARCASS
Despicable EP
NUCLEAR BLAST

The four tracks offered here of material that "didn't make the [forthcoming album's] cut" may be comparatively excessively scalar and unusually tentative, but they still possess a tone and style that oozes singularity.

CONNIE GORDON

DISTANT
Dawn Of Corruption
UNIQUE LEADER

Distant play a sludgy form of deathcore with occasional bursts of speed and very intermittent trips up the fretboard from one of the three guitarists. There are smatterings of interest here, but also not much that's unique.

REMFRY DEDMAN

EWIGKEIT
23
DEATH TO MUSIC

British black metal's chief contrarian returns with a collection of thunderous, doomy heavy metal hymns, albeit of a distinctly lysergic and unpredictable stripe. Winning proof that even the left-hand path leads back to Sabbath eventually.

DOM LAWSON

FACE OFF
Machines
SELF-RELEASED

A post-rock duo based in Sweden, Face Off's azure soundscapes are repeatedly dragged back to earth with leaden doom, a gratifying offset to Marija Vitasovic's breathy vocals and glittering leads drifting amidst a dreamlike haze.

TOM O'BOYLE

MILK WHITE THROAT
Hierachy EP
SELF-RELEASED

There's a dose of Deftones within this Brighton three-piece's EP, but it's just a just a jumping-off point as the three tracks undergo emotional trials in real time, amidst dynamic and dreamy bursts that unfurl to a genuine internal beat.

JONATHAN SELZER

OROCHEN
Thylacine
SUICIDE

Orochen's darkly romantic, widescreen post-metal squall is full of bittersweet hooks, disarming crescendos and neo-folk atmospherics. As autumn descends, this feels like a suitably downbeat but stirring soundtrack.

DOM LAWSON

Emma Ruth Rundle & Thou: cut from the same cloth

EMMA RUTH RUNDLE & THOU

May Our Chambers Be Full

SACRED BONES

A startling sonic marriage between the grime and the sublime

THOU DIVING HEADFIRST into collaborations isn't a new thing. They've done numerous integrative works with The Body, but eyebrows will crook in the direction of this creative collision. Emma Ruth Rundle is mostly known for her folksy post-rock output and teaming up with the Baton Rouge bashers seems askew. Initially, anyway. Despite still sounding like a band chained to the bottom of the ocean, Thou have issued a bevy of recognisable covers and morose acoustic works over the years and Emma is nothing but a daring chameleonic force. The result is unanticipated and stunning, as *May Our Chambers Be Full* summons the angelic, throaty wisp of Emma's voice and integrates it with Thou's stacked chord calamity to open a portal to the 90s.

Tracks like *Monolith* and *Ancestral Recall* combine Emma's airy husk with Bryan Funck's banshee rasp to invoke the tender groan and boisterous below of Seattle city square monument hopefuls Kurt Cobain and Chris Cornell, respectively – not to mention the accessible melodies playing alongside the sledgehammering that deliver passing similarities to the bands those gentlemen fronted. *Killing Floor* could be an outtake from *Bloody Kisses* with aquatic bass and frizzy walls of guitar laying simple, yet anthemic, chord progressions and setting a seething table for forays into a vampire baritone not unlike Peter Steele's. When the collaboration pulls back from the pummelling chords and creepy *Black Hole Sun*-inspired note walking, what remains in a track like *The Valley* is a world of brief ambient noisescapes in which Neurosis and Nine Inch Nails are at the head of the keyboard-swelled table.

This collaboration sees its principle figures not only bringing their talents to the table, but stepping outside expectation for a surprising push into sonic shape-shifting and a greater melodic good.

FOR FANS OF: Type O Negative, Soundgarden, Inter Arma

CONNIE GORDON

GHOSTEMANE

Anti-Icon

BLACKMAGE

Florida's trap metal renegade ransacks his past for inspiration

Ghostemane has been at the forefront of trap metal since his *Oogabooga* debut in 2015. Fusing genres like some kooky scientist and with a grotesque visual aesthetic, the Florida-born artist defies the idea that trap metal is just "screaming over a trap beat." His eighth studio album details the greatest emotional turbulences of Ghostemane's life – losing his father at 17 and finding escapism in hardcore punk music – blending techno, industrial, rap, metal and more. *Anti-Icon* pays a lot of respect to the 00s too, pulling riffs from early metalcore on *Vagabound* and *Lazaretto* or carrying faint traces of Linkin Park's *Meteora*. Blanketed with Ghostemane's staple nihilistic sound, *Anti-Icon* is ominous, unnerving, and an exhilarating experience.

FOR FANS OF: SCXRLXRD, Marilyn Manson, $uicideboy$

YASMINE SUMMAN

HAMMERFALL

Live! Against The World

NAPALM

Swedish power metallers reach the high notes in Germany

While Hammerfall deliver good studio albums, it's onstage they come into their own, as is proven here. The band's third live release was recorded in Germany at the start of 2020 and you can sense the energy surge the Swedes get from the rabid crowd. There's no time for clever nuances; what you get is anthem after fist-banging anthem, with vocalist Joacim Cans acting as a charismatically bombastic cheerleader. The two-hour set spans the band's catalogue, and they celebrate the 20th anniversary of the classic *Renegade* album with a special medley. The high spots are *Blood Bound*, *Let The Hammer Fall* and *Hearts On Fire*. *Live! Against The World* will put a smile on any metal maniac's face.

FOR FANS OF: Accept, Amaranthe, Blind Guardian

MALCOLM DOME

INFERA BRUO

Rites Of The Nameless

PROSTHETIC

Boston's progressive black metallers pull back their claws

Rites Of The Nameless is Infera Bruo's fourth full-length and while they are deemed progressive black metal – probably because of clean vocal lines – the record doesn't feel particularly progressive or exciting. *The Breath Of Chaos* is a promising start and *Latent Foe Arcane* marries harsh vocals with a beautiful harmony, but the song soon drags while the symphonic build-up of *Cimmerian Shade* feels unnecessary at best. The record is fully produced and mixed by frontman Galen Baudhuin, but he's edited out much of the hard-hitting black metal that the Botstonians are clearly capable of – *Frayed* is explosive in its first few minutes and does much to boost the view that Infera Bruo could be fantastic.

FOR FANS OF: Enslaved, Borknagar, Primordial

CHERYL CARTER

IRONED OUT
We Move As One
GSR ENTERTAINMENT

London hardcore veterans update their urban credentials

Formed in 2014 in an effort to shake up the London scene, Ironed Out feature members of Knuckledust, 50 Caliber, Bun Dem Out and more. Taking the straight-up hardcore sound and throwing hip hop and grime in the mix made for two satisfying EPs, *Us And Them* and *In These Ends*, released in 2015 and 2018 respectively. *We Move As One* is a welcome full-length featuring 12 strong tracks with noticeably more crafty songwriting and richer production than previous efforts. The distinctive, honest vocals and angry lyrics play enormously well with the circling melodies and riffs, and the band's ability to mesh raw aggression and easy groove is great fun. *Pavement Strong*, *Ain't Raw* and *Crazy Old World* are particularly memorable but *Our Struggles Don't Count* is the real standout here. This album is a winner.

FOR FANS OF: Knuckledust, Madball, Body Count

NIK YOUNG

KHORS
Where The World Acquires Eternity
ASHEN DOMINION

Ukrainian BM lynchpins make an historical paean to community

Khors are one of Ukraine's longest-running black metal bands, but they rarely get mentioned as a worthy force within the subgenre. This is a pity because they have unveiled some genuine moments of cinematically widescreen BM across seven full-lengths. On *Where The World Acquires Eternity*, Khors have constructed their most involved, emotionally rife record yet. This LP is tethered to a historical concept based on Ukraine's 'Executed Renaissance' of the 1930s, specifically when a complex that housed many of the country's artists came under serious repression by Stalin's totalitarian regime, resulting in the death, exile or suicide of its inhabitants. The heavy thematic base fits the atmospheric yet often viciously succinct songwriting Khors wield in 2020. The band are finally on the same artistic level as fellow countrymen Drudkh in terms of musical peaks and valleys and the transference of culturally ingrained pain.

FOR FANS OF: Behemoth, Gaerea, Drudkh

DEAN BROWN

KING MOTHERSHIP
The Ritual
CENTURY MEDIA

Periphery frontman embarks on a new sonic adventure

Periphery's Spencer Sotelo is breaching uncharted territory with his latest endeavour. King Mothership's debut album flirts with 80s synth-pop on tracks like *Goodnight My Darling*, and even a brief stint with pop-punk that's comparable to All Time Low. But he doesn't stray too far from his heavier roots, with the aid of Periphery bandmate Matt Halpern and ex-Slaves bassist Tai Wright, to deliver pounding, riff-happy tracks like *Ego 101*. Spencer's ability to adapt to new climates thrives in *The Ritual*'s theatrical setting as he narrates the tale of a failed musician who makes a deal with the devil, using the juxtaposition of vocals in a Jekyll and Hyde fashion to amplify the rollercoaster nature of the story. This solo debut puts Spencer at the wheel, with the opportunity to indulge into his wildest creatives desires that flaunt his love for making music.

FOR FANS OF: The Mars Volta, The Dear Hunter, Ice Nine Kills

YASMINE SUMMAN

KINGDOM OF GIANTS
Passenger
SHARPTONE

Californian metalcore troupe surrender mileage for melody

Two Suns is a smart opener for this North Californian six-piece's fourth album, given its heavy riffs, sweeping melodies, and catchy chorus. As early singles *Sync* and *Wayfinder* suggested, while there are some solid breakdowns and powerful drumming in the mix and the interplay of Dana Willax and bassist Jonny Reeves' singing and raspy screams works well, for the most part *Passenger* is more melodic than ever with a lot of clean vocal sections. Despite Kingdom Of Giants having been on this trajectory for a few years now, it's still hard not to miss the more distinctive and aggressive sound of 2014's *Ground Culture*. Meanwhile, tracks like *Night Shift* and *Blue Dream* see them moving in a more electronic and ethereal territory, which might please synthcore fans but stops them standing out from the crowd as strongly as they are capable of.

FOR FANS OF: ERRA, Dayseeker, Wage War

NIK YOUNG

Molasses emerge victorious from tragedy

MOLASSESS
Through The Hollow
SEASON OF MIST

Former The Devil's Blood members undergo a majestic rebirth

AFTER THEIR EMOTIONAL tribute to the sadly departed The Devil's Blood guitarist and vocalist Selim Lemouchi at Roadburn in 2014, many had hoped the glowing embers might yet spark a strange new fire, and the faithful were rewarded when Molassess, led by Selim's sister and TDB vocalist Farida Lemouchi, took the stage at the same festival last year. Now, after just an EP's worth of recorded material, the band have re-emerged with a startling full-length that both exceeds and defies expectations. And while the talent, history and intricate layers of connective tissue mean similarities and throughlines can be identified, *Through The Hollow* makes clear that this is very much a singular, standalone entity with its own distinct vision.

As one might expect, much of this hinges on Farida's striking and versatile voice, though the unexpected and unforeseen pathways taken by the rest of the band – particularly guitarists Oeds Beydals and Ron van Herpen – should certainly not be underestimated. This said, the album begins in relatively unassuming manner, with the title track trickling slowly into life with slippery, silvery melodies and only slowly building towards a full head of steam. From here on in the band weave together a truly kaleidoscopic array of influences and inferences, from the wild disco-prog of *Death Is* and the wonky, Alice In Chains-esque melodies of *The Maze Of Stagnant Time* to the epic *Formless Hands*, which begins with a dark, funky pulse and takes in Italian horror soundtrack bloops before reaching a chanted, ritualistic crescendo.

Through The Hollow is a truly progressive, truly psychedelic piece of work that's loaded with baroque pleasures and musical ideas that are as hard to grasp as moonbeams – an album that might have been born of tragedy, but has seen its players dig deep to find strength and power amid all the cruel and unfathomable sorrows.

FOR FANS OF: Gold, Death SS, The Devil's Blood

ALEX DELLER

RYANNE VAN DORST/PRESS

Pallbearer: head and shoulders above their doom peers

PALLBEARER

Forgotten Days

NUCLEAR BLAST

Arkansan doomsters return with the feelbad hit of the autumn

DEATH AND MISERY have long stalked Pallbearer's output. Yet the past eight years have seen the band claw themselves out of the funereal pits of debut *Sorrow And Extinction* as they introduced stronger gothic, melodic and even prog elements into their repertoire. Sure, they haven't exactly been sunshine and daisies since, but their gloom had transformed into something shared, almost triumphant. By the time the band released *Heartless* in 2017, their songwriting had reached anthemic peaks, albeit peaks they summarily flung themselves from.

Forgotten Days is a glorious headfirst plunge back into the darkest recesses of Pallbearer's sound, taking the crushing abyssal tones of their debut and marrying it to their newfound ear for monolithic songs while stripping away some of the overt proggishness of *Heartless* in the process. In tackling themes of family, sadness and loss – both emotional and physical – the band achieve a sense of universal resonance, wailing into a void that then amplifies their anguish into a galvanising force. It's hard to hear lines like *'Time has changed and so have I / All these faces I don't recognise'* from the title track and not resonate with a pain painted so vividly.

If Brett Campbell's emotionally stratospheric vocal melodies don't catch you, then the instrumental passages surely will. Beyond the Sabbathian marching rhythms and doleful guitar solos it's the colossal choruses and keening guitars of *Stasis* and *The Quicksand Of Existing* that truly bring some arena-sized ambition to the table. Synth-heavy closer *Caledonia* serves an 80s goth curveball that shows there are still innovations yet to come and Randall Dunn's stellar production ensures nothing is lost in bringing the behemoth to life. *Forgotten Days* captures a band not only at the top of their game but also genre. Pallbearer are building a legacy where misery doesn't just love company – it's compulsory.

FOR FANS OF: Warning, Hangman's Chair, Godthrymm

RICH HOBSON

LA FIN

The Endless Inertia

ARGONAUTA

Italian post-metal collective tread familiar ground

Over the past decade or so the term 'post-metal' has shifted from referring to a panoply of different styles and approaches to signalling when a band sound a bit like Isis and/or Neurosis. Lumbering riffs? Ponderous rhythms? Throat-shredding vocals? Desolate arpeggios? All of this applies to Italian band La Fin, whose debut album is nevertheless likely to prove an enjoyable listen for fans of the above. To be fair, *The Endless Inertia* – a very post-metal album title, it has to be said – showcases a band whose grasp of dynamics elevates them above the subgenre's more stolid practitioners. Plus, it's a gorgeous-sounding record whose heaviest moments, such as *Zero*, ring with exceptional clarity and emotional force.

FOR FANS OF: Neurosis, Isis, The Ocean

JOSEPH STANNARD

LIKE MOTHS TO FLAMES

No Eternity In Gold

UNFD

Columbus Ohio crew embark on a journey of spiritual discovery

Five albums into their career, Like Moths To Flames sound like they have finally arrived. Where 2017's *Dark Divine* lost itself in lofty concepts and smouldering atmospherics, *No Eternity In Gold* laces the melodic devastation of 2012's *When We Don't Exist* with a newfound moral purpose. Delivering a scathing commentary on religion and the futility of humanity's obsession with the afterlife that leads to neglect of the present day, the Ohio four-piece's 2020 guise pits vocalist Chris Roetter's emotional range against neck-snapping breakdowns while tackling a very personal spiritual conflict. On the basis of the show-stopping guitar display on *A Servant Of Plague* alone, LMTF have found their place on the cutting edge of metalcore, and not a moment too soon.

FOR FANS OF: The Word Alive, Wage War, Secrets

ALI COOPER

MÖRK GRYNING

Hinsides Vrede

SEASON OF MIST

Swedish black metal prodigies return to the fiery fray

It's hard to say what was most puzzling about Mörk Gryning's 1995 debut: that it was the brilliant Swedish answer to Norwegian symphonic black metal or that its two creators were only 15 and 19 years old respectively. Whatever it was, a quarter of a century, five more albums and a 15-year hiatus later, they've picked up almost exactly where they left off, albeit with a slicker edge. There may be some surprising clean choir parts and few folkish acoustic interludes, but while *Hinsides Vrede* is surprisingly luminous in tone, those still piercing yet classy staccato riffs blazing through the northern sky will satisfy even the most jaded fan of classic Swedish black metal.

FOR FANS OF: Vinterland, Unanimated, Dissection

OLIVIER BADIN

WORLD SERVICE

Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

ARCADIAN CHILD

Protopsycho

RIPPLE MUSIC / KOZMIK ARTIFACTZ

This Cypriot psych act peddle mellow, Eastern-inspired riffing, but undo the vibes with distractingly reedy vocals. There is promise, but plenty of enlightenment is required before AC reach nirvana.

ALEX DELLER

BHAIRA

Dying To See The Light

BAIGAN

Blending a diverse vocal attack with death metal riffs and drum'n'bass beats, This debut proves this India-born duo are worth your time. We could do without infantile songtitles like *Eat My Dick*, though…

MATT MILLS

INDOCTRINATE

Antilogos

UNHOLY PROPHECIES

Indoctrinate are far more primitive than your average Chilean band, yet they're tighter than their war metal peers, still permeated with the cavernous death metal the country has become synonymous with.

OLIVIER BADIN

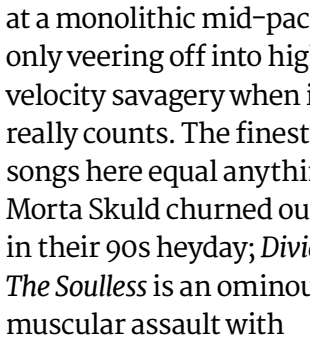
MORTA SKULD
Suffer For Nothing
PEACEVILLE

Veteran Wisconsin death squad keep it desolate

Continuing the ferocious renaissance that started with *Wounds Deeper Than Time* in 2017, Milwaukee's death metal kings are on merciless form on their sixth full-length. Still firmly rooted in an old-school ethos, *Suffer For Nothing* delivers most of its jaw-shattering uppercuts at a monolithic mid-pace, only veering off into high-velocity savagery when it really counts. The finest songs here equal anything Morta Skuld churned out in their 90s heyday; *Divide The Soulless* is an ominous, muscular assault with a doomy undertow; *Extreme Tolerance* crackles with chaotic, violent intent; the title track marries pitch-black thrash with sledge-hammer blasts and some deeply (Celtic) frosty riffing. Their world view remains bleak as fuck, but Morta Skuld are blazing away in death's shadow regardless.

FOR FANS OF: Skeletal Remains, Monstrosity, Autopsy

DOM LAWSON



MR. BISON
Seaward
SUBSOUND

Oceanic Italian prog/psych trio get their rocks on

The eye-catching sleeve may look like it should have been hanging in a bohemian student bedsit circa 1969, and the hippie shirts, beards and fedora are all present and correct, but this Italian power trio sound more like their introduction to psychedelic acid fuzz came in the 90s via Monster Magnet, The Hellacopters and Motorpsycho. Mr. Bison's fourth LP is a nautical concept album, so they've audibly got themselves some groovy chemistry going on. Average song lengths have expanded with the prog quotient, although the songs remain pointed, varied and accessible. Emotive vocals and harmonies reveal far more skill and effort than most in the psych idiom, and there's a weighty, ripping metallic flair throughout, rendered warm and hazy by haunting wafts of sonic patchouli.

FOR FANS OF: Kyuss, Hawkwind, Orange Goblin

CHRIS CHANTLER

ODOACER
There The Vultures Will Gather
CHURCH ROAD

Ageless Oblivion's tech death guitarist takes the black

Black metal fans can be notoriously insular, so when musicians who've been in non-BM bands venture into their grim waters, the drawbridge tends to be raised immediately. Such close-minded behaviour is counterproductive in 2020. As Ageless Oblivion's David Porter shows on Odoacer's debut, chops honed through technical/progressive DM can be equally applied to the kind of quasi-Leviathan-worship heard here. While Porter may lack the abstract and abject terror at the pith of Wrest's core, and the resounding production might be ill-fitting for the isolationist-BM-by-way-of-Mgła feel he's going for, there's cathartic fire to *The Unkindest Cut*, *Dirge Unto Nemesis*'s decree of discordant disorder and the equally sprawling and ambitious closer, *Cyclops*. The seriousness with which Porter presents his art should silence the staunchest gatekeeper, and time may forge a singular voice.

FOR FANS OF: Leviathan, Judas Iscariot, Mgła

DEAN BROWN

PARADISE IN FLAMES
Devil's Collection
BLOOD BLAST

Orchestral Brazillian nasties strike a resonating chord

Paradise In Flames are underdogs who have been bubbling away within the Brazillian metal underground for almost two decades, yet, internationally, remain largely unknown. Granted, wearing the 'symphonic black metal' tag is unlikely to turn heads, since the likes of Dimmu Borgir and Septicflesh have seemingly exhausted the demand for that kind of bombast. What sets this quartet apart, though, is Paradise In Flames' balance. While Dimmu's recent output has seen the orchestras dilute their heaviness, *Devil's Collection* is both malevolent and opulent. The tenor vocals go all-out on *I'm Sure Your Gods Have Seen This Before*'s chorus, yet the band also know when to dial things back, resulting in the unencumbered grooves of *Satan's Laws*. Paradise In Flames deserve to ascend the symphonic black metal ranks after this, not least of all for reminding us what made the subgenre so great to start with.

FOR FANS OF: Emperor, Ages, Dimmu Borgir

MATT MILLS

Palm Reader head off on a gripping post-hardcore thrill ride

PALM READER
Sleepless
CHURCH ROAD

Surrey's hardcore punk aficionados reveal their true breadth of vision

IT'S CRAZY TO think that 2020 marks Palm Reader's 10th year as a band. Where many of their contemporaries have succumbed to defeat or simply given up, Palm Reader have not only soldiered on but quietly sharpened their instincts and honed their songwriting craft with each successive release.

Building upon an already solid foundation of 2013's *Bad Weather* and 2015's *Beside The Ones We Love* – albums that saw them frequently described as the UK's answer to The Dillinger Escape Plan – 2018's *Braille* was hailed by fans as a stunning, cohesive record of epic contrasts, one that transcended the invisible boundaries that gatekeepers often erroneously apply to any band with a background in hardcore. *Sleepless*, the band's fourth full-length, pushes the boundaries once again and puts into stark perspective the absurdity of trying to pigeonhole one of the most creative, heavy acts the UK currently has to offer. The form that heaviness takes is far more nuanced, disciplined and above all captivating than anything we've heard from Palm Reader before.

Rather than resort to the usual tired clichés of volume for volume's sake, *Sleepless* is beautifully dynamic. The proceeding quiet on *A Bird And Its Feathers* makes the ensuing sonic storm sound particularly apocalyptic, while the Fender Rhodes synth on *Ending Cycle* calls to mind the likes of Radiohead and the shimmering guitars towards the song's end evoke Glaswegian post-rock legends Mogwai.

That's not to say Palm Reader have abandoned their roots, as just a cursory listen to the furious *Stay Down* will attest, but it says a lot that *Sleepless* is at its strongest when Palm Reader dive deep into hitherto unexplored territory. If you've slept on Palm Reader thus far, now's the time to wake the fuck up. *Sleepless* is a distinct, idiosyncratic, beautifully crafted heavy album that it would be simply criminal to ignore.

FOR FANS OF: Rolo Tomassi, Cult Of Luna, Radiohead

REMFRY DEDMAN

Mad tunes? Greg Puciato's gotham

GREG PUCIATO
Child Soldier: Creator Of God
FEDERAL PRISONER

The Dillinger Escape Plan's master polymath goes off the scale

AFTER SPENDING 16 years as the voice and face of comfortably one of the most eclectic, expansive and impressive bands of this millennium, The Dillinger Escape Plan, no one should really be approaching Greg Puciato's debut solo album not expecting the unexpected. But, even by those standards, *Child Soldier: Creator Of God* is a mammoth undertaking – a record of such labyrinthian scope that it requires total commitment from even the most faithful listener to unravel.

The opening 85-second, acoustic strum of *Heaven Of Stone* might make you think that he's gone folk, the song owing more to the elegiac swoon of Jeff Buckley than it does anything metal, before the throbbing beat of *Creator Of God* hits you like Death Grips gone r'n'b and then segues into *Fire For Water*: part *Broken*-era Nine Inch Nails, part latter day Pig Destroyer. Three tracks in and the breadth of Puciato's influences would be enough to give the genre police a migraine, but despite this *Child Soldier...*'s main consistent through-line is the quality of the compositions and the unmistakable vocals that thread them all together.

Picking highlights will depend on your favourite iteration of Greg; if you're a fan of his more electronic, danceable work in The Black Queen then a song like *Fireflies* or the spectacular *A Pair Of Questions* will hit the spot. Maybe you appreciate the ambient pop of Talk Talk; if so, then *Through The Walls* will be your go-to. Or perhaps you long to hear a return to the fury of TDEP, in which case, *Roach Hiss* will fill that gap.

Often disorientating, but always surprising, this is a record that has so many layers and creative twists and turns that it is often overwhelming. But, in terms of crafting a singular voice, Greg Puciato may have just set himself up to be this generation's Mike Patton.

FOR FANS OF: Nine Inch Nails, David Sylvian, Between The Buried And Me

STEPHEN HILL

POSSESSOR
Damn The Light
APF

British noisemakers combine their love of horror and hops

To decode the racket purveyed by these London sideburn farmers, those in the know could look at the previous album titles – *Dead By Dawn*, *The Ripper*, *Electric Hell* – to quickly conclude certain cinematic mainstays and heavy metal tropes are the fuel in their tank. However, the trio pull as much from the worlds of sludgy stoner doom played through refrigerator-sized amplifiers as they nick from the esoteric corners of Lee Dorrian's record collection and NYC noise rock. *Damn The Light* ponies up traditional thunder (*Bloodsuckers*), Astrosoniq-inspired slinkiness (*Return To Slaughter High*) and still manages to sound like the distorted manifestation of a rapidly expanding beer gut.

FOR FANS OF: High On Fire, Black Tusk, Unsane

CONNIE GORDON

RÏCÏNN
Nereïd
BLOOD MUSIC

Igorrr/Öxxö Xööx chanteuse makes her way out of the menagerie

Not content with boiling metalheads' piss alongside avant-garde bands Igorrr and Öxxö Xööx, Laure Le Prunenec's had a go of it on her own. Her solo moniker, is much less polarising while occasionally covering similar ground; songs like *Doris* play off that jarring juxtaposition of her baroque, floating notes against metallic cascades, plucked violins kneeling before antagonistically dense backing vocals from Cattle Decap's Travis Ryan. However, most of *Nereïd* comprises more subdued, electronic-tinged numbers, and the most exhilarating moments are the quietest. Bookends *Zéro* and *Erani* excel through their lack of instrumentation. Just layer upon layer of Laure – steeped in drama, soberingly intense. And unlike Igorrr, it makes sense without any animal noises.

FOR FANS OF: Björk, Vampillia, Chelsea Wolfe

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

RUFF MAJIK
The Devil's Cattle
MONGREL

South African fuzz rockers have a rifle through their record collection

The South African fuzz merchants return with another amphetamine-fuelled joyride through the dive bars and dark alleys of their psychic landscape. Building on the darker elements of 2019's *Tårn*, their latest showcases a dizzying array of styles, from sleazy backroom funk (*Gregory*), to full-throttle garage rockers (*Heart Like An Alligator*) to hyperkinetic blasts of psychedelia (*Lead Pills And Thrills*). There's also metal, classic rock and even a bit of acoustic balladry in *God Knows*. But *The Devil's Cattle* feels almost *too* eclectic; styles jump so dramatically that it sometimes feels like wholly different bands at work. Ultimately however, this is 51 minutes of groovy, hip-shaking fun.

FOR FANS OF: Queens Of The Stone Age, Zeal & Ardor, Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats

JOE DALY

SCORDATURA
Mass Failure
GORE HOUSE PRODUCTIONS

Glasgow death metal brutes keep their genre on cruise control

Since its creation, death metal has proven to be quite the malleable plaything. Whether you're Rivers Of Nihil with your sax-infused tech-death, or melodic Vikings Amon Amarth, there's just so much you can do with the genre. Scordatura are not testament to that. Instead of giving death metal their own characterful spin, these Scots tread ground that brutalists like Cannibal Corpse already exhausted three decades ago. Gory lyrics, noise and speed all batter incessantly, torrenting down at the expense of intriguing variety or engaging hooks. It's no more interesting here than the last 10,000 times. Although its relentlessness could make its material enjoyable live, as an album, *Mass Failure* is a slog destined to turn off all but the most single-minded of brutal death metal diehards.

FOR FANS OF: Cannibal Corpse, Dying Fetus, Suffocation

MATT MILLS

SEVENDUST
Blood & Stone
RISE

Atlanta's wildly successful hard rockers get their fire back

In recent times, Sevendust have released decent albums, but with little drive. With *Blood & Stone* the band finally sound as if they mean business again. Thankfully it has more in common with early releases like *Animosity* and *Seasons* than anything recorded in the past decade. The songs bristle with melody and aggression; vocalist Lajon Witherspoon pushes himself to the limit throughout, as he combines fluently with Clint Lowery's inimitable guitar dynamic to raise the likes of *Dying To Live* and *Kill Me* to rare heights of emotional power, while *Nothing Left To See Here Anymore* is an impassioned modern power ballad. The album finishes with a fine cover of Soundgarden's *The Day I Tried To Live*. It's a classy way to end Sevendust's best work in years.

FOR FANS OF: Disturbed, Soundgarden, Stone Sour

MALCOLM DOME

SHIBALBA
Nekrologie Sinistrae (Orchestral Noise Opus I)
AGONIA

Trance-inducing rites from the Greek and Swedish shadows

Shibalba's new rite is adorned with the baroque painting, At The Gates Of Hell, by the gifted 17th-century Italian artist Giacomo del Pò. Such a demonically charged visual requires music evoking a complementary other-worldly response. Shibalba achieve this through sinister shamanic repetition. Embellishing industrial, electronic and ambient drone with an array of traditional instruments including Tibetan horns, singing bowls, ceremonial bells, gongs, and mysterious musical objects hewn from bones and skulls, there's an enticingly eerie construct here that will appeal to fans of horror scores or avant-garde world music, albeit still falling within the vast parameter of extreme metal. It's made for a niche audience, sure, but it has the innate power to draw you into an ayahuasca-fuelled vision quest from the comfort of your candlelit living room.

FOR FANS OF: Lurker Of Chalice, Rotting Christ, Lustmord

DEAN BROWN

SIX FEET UNDER
Nightmares Of The Decomposed
METAL BLADE

Chris Barnes packs his bong with more bloody flesh

Arguably death metal's most prolific band, Six Feet Under haven't always been an easy band to love, not least due to their propensity for godawful covers albums. Nonetheless, recent years have seen Chris Barnes' crew hit a new level of consistency, and *Nightmares Of The Decomposed* continues the upsurge in killer riffs and sharp songwriting that began on 2018's *Unburied* EP. Admittedly, Six Feet Under are still endearingly sloppy at times, and Barnes's vocals are manifestly less monstrous than they were 20 years ago, but from clattering opener *Amputator* onwards, the band's 17th full-length packs a fearsome punch. Both *Zodiac* and *Death Will Follow* are brutish exercises in simplicity and groove; *Migraine* is as woozy and oppressive as its title demands; and *Drink Blood, Get High* is a neatly vicious manifesto for terminally stoned miscreants everywhere.

FOR FANS OF: Obituary, Cannabis Corpse, Phrenelith

DOM LAWSON

Sólstafir embody Iceland's wild west

SÓLSTAFIR
Endless Twilight Of Codependent Love
SEASON OF MIST

Icelandic enigmas fuse the intimate and the epic

SÓLSTAFIR'S MUSIC DOESN'T feel like it's been written so much as carved out of the landscape by blizzards and howling gales. The Reykjavík quartet's seventh album is no exception. It's as elemental and unknowable as modern metal gets. In that respect, it's business as usual. But in others, it's a step on from anything they've done before. Sólstafir have never been short of scope and ambition, but *Endless Twilight Of Codependent Love* is the sound of a band subtly but distinctly changing things up.

Endless... is a hefty record, its nine songs unfolding over more than an hour. The opening one-two of *Akerri* and *Drýsill* clock in at almost 20 minutes between them. The former is a shapeshifting prog metal epic that's as disorientating as being lost in a snowstorm. The latter is a slab of glacial Nordic goth whose spiralling guitars are underpinned by post-punk synths (Sólstafir are masters of making not very much sound like a hell of a lot). Both are equally powerful, in completely different ways.

That streak of restlessness runs through *Endless...*. Where past albums have each had a recognisable but distinct topography, this time they've thrown all the pieces in the air and let the wind carry them wherever. *Til Moldar* is a warm ballad that billows like blood in a spring pool, while the controlled savagery of *Dionysus* is an explicit callback to their black metal roots. Most startling of all is *Or*, which starts off as lounge jazz before a force-10 gale starts blowing in.

The fixed point throughout is frontman Aðalbjörn 'Addi' Tryggvason, whose wounded-animal moan offers something to cling on. The fact he's mostly singing in Icelandic only deepens the enigma; ironically, the English-language *Her Fall From Grace* is the least intriguing thing here lyrically. But even when they're stripping away a layer of mystery, Sólstafir sound like no one else out there. An album to get lost in, in every sense.

FOR FANS OF: Myrkur, Alcest, Sigur Rós

DAVE EVERLEY

PRESS/IRIS DÖGG EINARSDÓTTIR

Devin Townsend: big fan of *Pink Floyd: The Wall*

DEVIN TOWNSEND
Order Of Magnitude - Empath Volume 1
INSIDE OUT

Metal's crown prince gives two digits to dreariness and depression

THOUGH ON A substantially smaller conceptual scale than previous live documents *The Retinal Circus* and *Ziltoid Live At The Royal Albert Hall*, Devin Townsend's latest offering still provides two hours of effervescent escapism – or, as he calls it, a "vacation" that includes Hawaiian shirts, jazz hands and tutus as added extras. While the visual portion of this show filmed at London's Roundhouse provides more laughs, it's the musical side that's the most arresting, multi-coloured experience.

Aided by Frank Zappa associates Morgan Ågren and Mike Keneally as well as touch guitarist Markus Reuter, Haken keyboardist Diego Tejeida and Casualties Of Cool singer Ché Aimee Dorval, the *Empath Volume 1* line-up brings a dazzling improvisational feel to compositions stretching Devin's entire discography. And it's not just in the jams that punctuate the likes of *Gato* and *Heaven's End*, but the subtle flourishes hidden away in the sprawling *Genesis* and joyous opener *Borderlands* that add a uniqueness that befits his most recent album's musical ambition and timely message of hope. Ågren and Reuter in particular are worth the price of admission, with Devin's exquisite achievement of assembling such a worthy ensemble making *Order Of Magnitude* such a worthy chapter to revisit.

Having dissolved The Devin Townsend Project in order to fulfil this more challenging, personal endeavour, Canada's greatest showman is clearly in his element, having as much fun revisiting *Deadhead* as the absurd *Lucky Animals* and exuberant silliness of *Why?*. A cover of *Disco Inferno* isn't really the most essential live statement Devin has ever made, but sandwiched between the heartbreakingly beautiful *Spirits Will Collide* and towering closer *Kingdom*, it's a reminder that alongside his astonishing ability, vision and message, he's been put on this earth to bring smiles and laughter in a way that only the best heroes can.

FOR FANS OF: Frank Zappa, Haken, Ihsahn

ADAM REES

SPIRIT ADRIFT
Enlighted In Eternity
CENTURY MEDIA

Emphatic doom-stoked traditionalism from the Mid-West

Spirit Adrift are doing to classic metal what Pallbearer did to doom, as a so-called 'outsider' – namely former sludge/stoner musician Nate Garrett – is shedding a new light on a subgenre deemed as frozen in time. Now four albums in, he has gained much confidence both in his singing and songwriting. His earlier sincere yet occasionally shambolic stance has been replaced by a fistbanging mania that borrows from the best of both 80s and 90s classic metal yet without ever sounding retro or forced.

FOR FANS OF: Ozzy Osbourne, Haunt, Iced Earth

OLIVIER BADIN

TALLAH
Matriphagy
EARACHE

Philadelphian nu metal revivalists power up the shock generator

Tallah's debut album is not for the faint-hearted. The face of nu metal in 2020 is a grotesque one, according to the genre-disfiguring Philadelphia outfit masterminded by Max Portnoy, son of Dream Theater's Mike. Establishing their mission statement through chaotic tales embellished with venomous raps and despairing cleans, *Matriphagy* paints gruesome pictures you can't tear yourself away from. *Overconfidence* will make you reach for your JNCO jeans, *The Silo* rakes up spooky vibes from 00s gothic metal and *Cottonmouth*'s Code Orange-esque aural onslaught sets your teeth on edge. Tallah's shock-factor approach is contagious.

FOR FANS OF: Korn, Marilyn Manson, Code Orange

ALI COOPER

TOADEATER
Bit To Ewigen Daogen
REVOLVERMANN/MANIYAX

Anti-establishment post-black metallers come back for seconds

These German anarchist post-black metallers are back for a second full-length helping of desolation and despair following their 2019 debut, *Codex*, and this year's *Hestia* EP. Toadeater's strength is in their willingness to deviate from the script, as illustrated by the quieter passages of *Conquering The Throne*, which have as much in common with 80s post-punk and goth as anything on the metal spectrum. Likewise, *Crows And Sparrows* kicks off with a repetitive jangle that could have been torn from Joy Division's *Unknown Pleasures*. The emphasis on melody – carried by the instrumentation rather than the vocals – is noticeable throughout, as is the consideration invested in their use of the rhythm section as more than a simple timekeeping device. The use of synthesiser is limited to atmospheric shading, which better enables the sheet metal riffs to glower.

FOR FANS OF: Wolves In The Throne Room, Alcest, Thy Catafalque

JOSEPH STANNARD

THE UNGUIDED
Father Shadow
NAPALM

Former Sonic Syndicate members continue to add muscle to melody

Sweden's The Unguided have spent the better part of a decade juggling melody and heaviness, teaming guttural screams with a polished melodeath foundation. Recent albums have introduced a more synth-driven metalcore edge, an evolution continued by this fifth release. The energetic and positively aggressive *Crown Prince Syndrome* is an exuberant display of soaring vocals, shred and electronic flourishes while *Stand Alone Complex* has a similarly strong pull with weighty grooves, catchy hooks and anthemic choruses. Despite the decision to rehash three tracks from certain members' Sonic Syndicate days, *Father Shadow* remains a satisfying stomp down a well-trodden path.

FOR FANS OF: Sonic Syndicate, Amaranthe, Cypecore

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

FRANÇOIS NUQ/PRESS

VOUS AUTRES
Sel De Pierre
SEASON OF MIST

Gallic post-black metallers wrest their heads from the clouds

This French post-black metal duo's second record emerges only a year after the debut but showcases impressive growth. Don't let the 'post' prefix allow you to think that it's an hour of hazy shoegaze; while that does indeed form some of what's going on – an exhilarating updraft during opener *Onde* after a good few minutes of seismic pummelling for example – it's an altogether sludgier affair. *Vesuve* follows, glittering in atmospheric darkness that paves the way for chasm-rending riffing. Vocalist β's screams alone during the intro of *Sans Sèves* are earth-shattering, never mind the thunderous percussion beneath. Closing with *Nitre*'s nature sounds and electronic ambience, Vous Autres offer a unique twist on modern BM, less focused on dream states and rattling pace, instead offering cataclysmically crushing lamentations.

FOR FANS OF: Neurosis, Throane, Amenra

TOM O'BOYLE

WAYFARER
A Romance With Violence
PROFOUND LORE

Denver's cross-genre adventurers return to the Wild West

On 2018's *World's Blood*, Wayfarer unveiled an immersive melding of black metal, doom and Americana that epitomised the emergent 'Denver sound'. Driving that vision further, they return with *A Romance With Violence*, their most fully realised statement yet. Playing out like a black metal *Deadwood*, the depravity and hostility of the Wild West feed the grim sonic narrative with equal parts aggression and melancholia, as in the stirring *Masquerade Of The Gunslingers*. Tempering its thundering intensity with interludes of folk and mournful atmospherics, *A Romance...* paints a reverential ode to America's most colourful era. From the sweeping heights of *The Crimson Rider (Gallows Frontier, Act I)* to the ragged splendour of closer *Vaudeville, A Romance With Violence* is a poignant and exhilarating affair that cements Wayfarer as one of American metal's most vital current voices.

FOR FANS OF: Agalloch, Panopticon, Falls Of Rauros

JOE DALY

WYTCH HAZEL
III: Pentecost
BAD OMEN

Medieval-minded classicists reach a state of pristine grace

Precision songcraft isn't necessarily the highest priority in heavy metal. A good headbanging riff, a neat solo and a half-catchy chorus will get a band a long way if they're performed with skill, conviction, energy, passion and atmosphere. Lancastrian trad metallers Wytch Hazel have bucketloads of these, but the 10 songs on this third LP – running the gamut from insistent floor-fillers, windswept epics and spine-tingling stomps to mystical ballads, jubilant gallopers and wistful singalongs – are uncommonly beautifully wrought. Each song is piled high with quadruple-tracked guitar melodies, honed into optimum shape and given richness and weight with a clean, classy, Martin Birch-style production job. Even dressed like wood-dwelling medieval Samaritans and singing lyrics exclusively on devotional Christian themes, Wytch Hazel's knack for an infectious, emotionally charged tune makes them one of the coolest bands around.

FOR FANS OF: Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Jethro Tull

CHRIS CHANTLER

RESURRECTIONS

Unearthing the latest metal reissues

Gautier Serre: Igorrr's chief of mischief

ON *EARLY RITUALS* (Listenable) **[8]**, Geordie hellraisers **SATAN** remaster three sterling demos from 1981/82 and '86. The earliest tunes are textbook exemplars of the roughening and toughening of the NWOBHM blueprint, promising deep satisfaction to any with a hankering for archaeological metal magic.

Despite their wayward journey, **HELLOWEEN** remain one of Germany's biggest and best bands, as these Nuclear Blast reissues attest. Their journey was seldom more wayward than on 2010's *Unarmed* **[5]**, a collection of soft, schmaltzy reinterpretations of Helloween classics that even singer Andi Deris has keenly derided; aside from delirious 17-minute symphonic medley *Keeper's Trilogy*, this is stacked with cringe. Thankfully, Helloween's following LP, *7 Sinners* **[8]**, was an ace return to Teutonic power: weighty and aggressive but, despite inevitable fillers, maintaining a quirky creativity – a process continued by 2013's *Straight Out Of Hell* **[8]**. Both albums exceed 70 minutes but maintain high energy and hit rates, and although these infectious, muscular anthems may not reinvent the steel, they joyously galvanise it.

Headbanging fellow countrymen **PRIMAL FEAR**'s latest Nuclear Blast reissues, 2007's *New Religion* **[6]** and 2009's *16.6 (Before The Devil Knows You're Dead)* **[7]**, sound a bit stuck in a mid-period rut, the former attempting radio-friendly pop savvy, the latter a more meat'n' potatoes reversion to type. Both are hit and miss, overlong and samey, whereas *Live In The USA* **[8]** is a sweaty rampage through a flawless tracklist, and 2012's *Unbreakable* **[8]** is one of Primal Fear's sharpest, most exuberant records, hitting every black-leather sweet spot with rampant panache.

If you find all this power metal a tad conservative, French nutters **IGORRR** provide a messy banquet for the most eclectic, anarchic tastes. 2010 debut *Nostril* **[6]** and 2012's marginally more coherent *Hallelujah* (both Nuclear Blast) **[7]** sound like 12 radios in a washing machine, such is this artfully annoying collision of baroque orchestral, black/death metal, frenetic breakcore, country hoedown, hip hop, trip hop, lounge jazz and god knows what else. Altogether downright batshit.

CHRIS CHANTLER

DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

LIVE EVIL

Your essential guide to the best and the biggest metal bands hitting the UK

BLACK STONE CHERRY

SEP 9 BRISTOL O2 Academy
SEP 10 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
SEP 11 LINCOLN Engine Shed
SEP 13 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
SEP 14 LEEDS O2 Academy
SEP 16 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
SEP 17 GLASGOW Barrowland
SEP 18 EDINBURGH Usher Hall
SEP 20 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
SEP 21 LIVERPOOL O2 Academy
SEP 23 FOLKESTONE Leas Cliff Hall
SEP 24 CARDIFF St Davids Hall
SEP 25 EXETER Great Hall
SEP 27 SOUTHAMPTON O2 Guildhall
SEP 28 CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange
SEP 29 LONDON Royal Albert Hall

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR 2021

DEVIN TOWNSEND, JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE, SAXON, BURY TOMORROW, SKINDRED, DIMMU BORGIR, DARK TRANQUILLITY, THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER, ORANGE GOBLIN, SYLOSIS, LIFE OF AGONY, JINJER, SVALBARD, GLORY HAMMER, SACRED REICH, VIO-LENCE + MORE

AUG 11-15 DERBYSHIRE Catton Hall

DESTRUCTION

WARBRINGER
CRISIX
DOMINATION

DEC 2 LONDON The Dome
DEC 3 MANCHESTER Academy 3
DEC 4 LIMERICK Dolan's Warehouse
DEC 5 DUBLIN Voodoo Lounge
DEC 6 GLASGOW Slay

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL 2021

KISS, SYSTEM OF A DOWN, KORN, DEFTONES, GOJIRA, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, SEPULTURA, STEEL PANTHER, ELECTRIC WIZARD, A.A. WILLIAMS, BARONESS, LACUNA COIL, TWIN TEMPLE, AIRBOURNE, ALESTORM, EMPLOYED TO SERVE, OBITUARY, VOLBEAT + MORE

JUNE 4-6 DERBYSHIRE Castle Donington

EVANESCENCE
WITHIN TEMPTATION

SEP 30 GLASGOW SSE Hydro Arena
OCT 1 LEEDS First Direct Arena
OCT 3 BIRMINGHAM Arena
OCT 4 LONDON The O2

FAITH NO MORE

JUN 7 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
JUN 8 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
JUN 9 GLASGOW O2 Academy
JUN 11 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
JUN 12 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton
JUN 13 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton

GUNS N' ROSES

JUN 18 LONDON Tottenham Hotspur Stadium
JUN 19 LONDON Tottenham Hotspur Stadium
JUN 22 DUBLIN Marlay Park
JUN 24 GLASGOW Bellahouston Park

HELLOWEEN

MAY 22 MANCHESTER Academy
MAY 23 LONDON O2 Brixton Academy

KILL THE LIGHTS

MAR 3 BOURNEMOUTH Anvil Rock Bar
MAR 4 BRIGHTON The Green Door Store
MAR 5 LONDON Boston Music Room
MAR 6 BRIDGEND Hobos
MAR 8 BRISTOL Rough Trade
MAR 9 LEEDS The Key Club
MAR 10 NOTTINGHAM The Old Salutation Inn
MAR 12 GLASGOW The Garage
MAR 14 BIRMINGHAM The Asylum Venue
JUN 4 DERBYSHIRE Download Festival

LAMB OF GOD

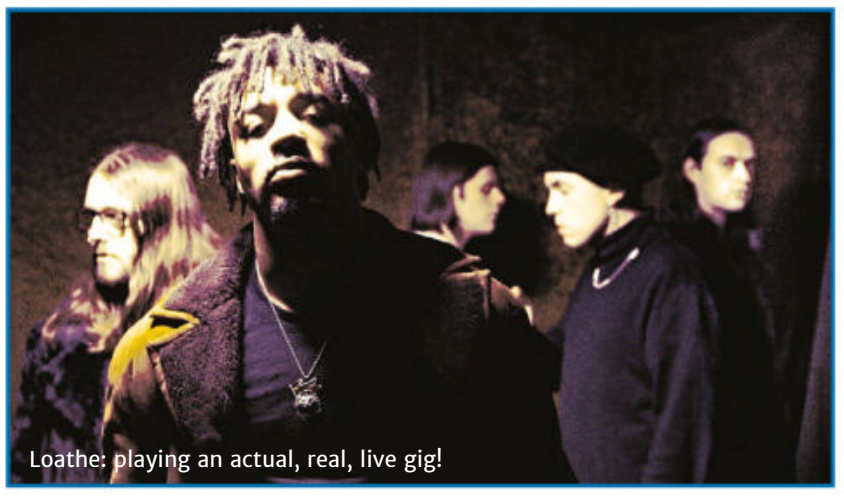
KREATOR

DEC 14 2021 BRISTOL O2 Academy
DEC 15 2021 MANCHESTER Academy
DEC 16 2021 GLASGOW O2 Academy
DEC 17 2021 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
DEC 19 2021 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton

LEEDS FESTIVAL 2021

FEVER 333, QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE + MORE

AUG 27-29 LEEDS Brahman Park



Loathe: playing an actual, real, live gig!

ROAD TRIPPIN'

LOATHE

A metal gig? In London? This month?! Loathe are making it happen

Has it been difficult putting out a new album in a year like this?
Erik Bickerstaffe (guitar/vocals): "Yes and no. Unfortunately we can't tour the record and play for everyone who is excited and listening, as well as any new and unaware folk to whom we could spread the good word of Loathe, which I think about a lot. Although, for us it became a reality shortly after the record had been released, so it's a bit of a mad situation to be in. Thankfully, though, we're all extremely grateful for the response it has been given. It's definitely a risk given the circumstances but we've been shown so much love and an overwhelming amount of support throughout the record's release."

What did you get up to in lockdown?
"We've been planning our next moves, always moving forward and updating what we deem needs to be updated. We're constantly churning out 'What if?'s and 'How about?'s. Mostly throughout lockdown, it has been the technical area that has been given some TLC, making sure we are well prepared for when the time comes to return on the 20th of October."

When did the opportunity to play this London gig actually show up?
"Actually, only a few weeks ago. The idea was floated to us by our manager Ryan and we pretty much jumped at the opportunity. It gave us something to look forward to but also a challenge in preparation because of how soon the event is. Things are coming together now and we're getting excited."

How is it going to work? Metal doesn't exactly lend itself to the 'stay seated and be calm' vibe…
"To us, our shows are universal, even in how you choose to enjoy them. If you want to lie down, dance, sit still – do it. We're not ones to advocate any one particular way to enjoy yourself at our shows so to us, it's not really any different. The premise of 'I am watching Loathe right now' never goes away regardless of setting. Put simply, our shows are more than just metal shows."

What are some of the positives you are taking from this whole experience?
"The amount of time we as a unit have had to reflect and be introspective. Just time in general; most people have hated the pause button but we've appreciated it."

LOATHE: PRESS.

A.A. Williams: no idle hands here

ROAD TRIPPIN'

A.A. WILLIAMS

The singer-songwriter bewitching the underground is heading to Download

How's your year gone since the release of the album?
"It's been alright, aside from the pandemic of course. I've been productive. I'm terrible at relaxing and never quite entered 'TV and ice-cream' lockdown mode. I'm a complete workaholic."

You played one of the very last London gigs before the UK went into lockdown. Does that feel like a lifetime ago now?
"Absolutely. It was getting so close to the wire, every day there was more bad news and uncertainty, I had no idea if the show was going to happen. To have had my first headline show scuppered by COVID would have been pretty annoying."

What have you managed to do in the meantime while the world's been on pause?
"I've been working on a video series called *Songs From Isolation* – fans have suggested songs for me to cover, I then rearrange them with stripped-down instrumentation and make a performance video. Each video has taken about four days to complete, and I'm very grateful to have had the distraction."

Once the music industry is somewhere back to normal, what are you hopeful to get done?
"Shows. As many shows as possible! I feel a real withdrawal from touring, the routine, the performance, chatting to fans, that nomadic lifestyle, I can't wait to return to it."

How will you look back on 2020?
"I'm so pleased to have been able to release *Forever Blue* amongst all of the upheaval. I'm very proud of the album and the response it's had, I hope that in years to come it remains a defining memory of 2020 for me. It's been such a strange and frustrating year, I'd like to try to focus on a positive element."

You're playing Download in June. What can we expect?
"I can't wait! I'll have my band with me and we've never played the festival before, so we'll be giving it everything we've got. We'll be playing tracks from the new album, plus a few older ones. I'm also looking forward to hanging out and watching some bands, throwing myself into the live music experience as much as I can after this year's enforced withdrawal."

A.A.WILLIAMS: PRESS. NIGHTWISH: PRESS/TINA KORHONEN

Nightwish: popping over to the UK for a couple of dates in May

LOATHE
OCT 20 LONDON Jazz Cafe

LUCIFER
NOV 7 GREAT YARMOUTH Hard Rock Hell
NOV 8 LONDON Underworld

MAYHEM
MORTIIS
MAR 23 MANCHESTER Academy 2
MAR 24 LIMELIGHT Belfast
MAR 25 DUBLIN Academy
MAR 26 GLASGOW Slay
MAR 27 BRISTOL The Fleece
MAR 28 LONDON Islington Academy

NIGHTWISH
MAY 1 BIRMINGHAM World Resorts Arena
MAY 2 LONDON SSE Wembley Arena

THE OCEAN
FEB 4 BRISTOL The Fleece
FEB 5 GLASGOW Slay
FEB 6 MANCHESTER Club Academy
FEB 7 LONDON 229
FEB 8 BRIGHTON Patterns

ORANGE GOBLIN
DEC 11 DUBLIN Grand Social
DEC 12 BELFAST Limelight
DEC 14 GLASGOW King Tuts
DEC 15 MANCHESTER Gorilla
DEC 16 BIRMINGHAM Asylum
DEC 17 CARDIFF The Globe
DEC 18 LONDON Underworld
DEC 19 LONDON Underworld

PARKWAY DRIVE
HATEBREED, CRYSTAL LAKE
APR 18 LONDON Wembley Arena

RADAR FESTIVAL 2021
DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, SLEEP TOKEN,

CONJURER, HACKTIVIST, HUMANITY'S LAST BREATH
JUL 30–31 GUILDFORD Casino Nightclub

RAMMSTEIN
JUN 12 BELFAST Boucher Road Playing Fields
JUN 16 CARDIFF Principality Stadium
JUN 19 COVENTRY Ricoh Arena

READING FESTIVAL 2021
FEVER 333, QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE + MORE
AUG 27–29 READING Richfield Avenue

SKUNK ANANSIE
OCT 26 GUILDFORD G Live
OCT 27 LEICESTER O2 Academy
OCT 28 FOLKSTONE Leas Cliff Hall
NOV 28 LINCOLN Engine Shed
NOV 29 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
DEC 1 GLASGOW O2 Academy
DEC 2 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
DEC 3 LEEDS O2 Academy
DEC 5 CARDIFF University Great Hall
DEC 6 BRISTOL O2 Academy
DEC 7 MANCHESTER O2 Victoria Warehouse
DEC 9 BRIGHTON Dome
DEC 10 CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL 2021
MAY 29 LEEDS Temple Newsam
MAY 30 HATFIELD Hatfield Park

THUNDER
UGLY KID JOE
MAY 13 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
MAY 14 BIRMINGHAM Resorts World Arena
MAY 15 LONDON SSE Wembley Arena
MAY 22 GLASGOW SEC
MAY 23 LEEDS Arena

LIVE REVIEWS

LAMB OF GOD
WHITECHAPEL/ BLEED FROM WITHIN

THE BROADBERRY, RICHMOND, VA

Virginia's metal behemoths bring their past and present to the boil

WHETHER WE LIKE it or not, livestreams are here to stay for the foreseeable, but they're doing a sterling job in whetting our appetites for seeing the bands we cherish on a stage, regardless of the restrictions in place. Now, in what seems a long time coming, Lamb Of God have joined the virtual gig party. Virginia's finest are playing both their latest, self-titled album and 2004's *Ashes Of The Wake* in full over two highly anticipated evenings and, because we're so very lucky, they've thrown a one-hour 'pre-show' into the mix as well, featuring interviews conducted by US radio host Jose Mangin and a couple of support bands for good measure.

When it comes to said supports, there is no question that **BLEED FROM WITHIN** come out on top. The Scottish metalcore outfit are a hot property right now, from the acclaim over latest album *Fracture* to the pyro in the middle of their staging threatening to toast every single member when it emerges. Positioned in the round, facing inwards and with a large digital screen as a background, the set leans heavily on the new record, with *Afterlife* from 2018's *Era* the only representation from the rest of their catalogue. At five songs long it's all too brief, but if you've ever wanted somebody to punch you in the face by means of introducing themselves, this does exactly that.

By contrast, **WHITECHAPEL**'s opening slot is provided by the DVD element of 2015's *Brotherhood Of The Blade*. Given they're writing a new album and touring drummer Alex Rüdinger lives in a different state, it's understandable that an exclusive stream would be a logistical nightmare, but a set devoid of anything from last year's *The Valley* is certainly a disappointment. Mind you, this doesn't stop the show being the sonic equivalent of rubbing your face with sandpaper – the breakdowns in *Section 8* and *Prostatic Fluid Asphyxiation* are ridiculously potent and the reception to *The Saw Is The Law* borders on full-blown carnage. Yes, it's been available for five years, but it's a perfect encapsulation of what Whitechapel can do in a live setting and there'll certainly be viewers enjoying it for the first time, so on that front it's a job well done.

Social distanced filming. In-your-face performance

THE SETS

LAMB OF GOD SET
Memento Mori
Checkmate
Gears
Reality Bath
New Colossal Hate
Resurrection Man
Poison Dream
Routes
Bloodshot Eyes
On The Hook

ENCORE
Contractor
Ruin
The Death Of Us
512

ASHES OF THE WAKE SET
Ashes Of The Wake
Laid To Rest
Hourglass
Now You've Got Something To Die For
The Faded Line
Omerta
Blood Of The Scribe
One Gun
Break You
What I've Become
Ashes Of The Wake
Remorse Is For The Dead

ENCORE
O.D.H.G.A.B.F.E.
The Subtle Arts Of Murder And Persuasion
Black Label

Choosing to film at The Broadberry in their hometown of Richmond is not so much an inspired move by **LAMB OF GOD** as a masterstroke. The intimate confines of the venue and organic nature of the camera shots give a feel that you're on the barrier of a sweaty club, and that only heightens the intensity throughout both shows. Night one's self-titled run reaffirms just how much of a treasure they are to our world: *Memento Mori* is comfortably the best opening track to a metal album you'll hear at any point this year and if *Gears* doesn't make an appearance when they finally tour again it'll be a travesty; it sounds absolutely monstrous tonight.

There's also a moment for reflection as Randy Blythe dedicates *Reality Bath* to the recently departed Riley Gale, a touching tribute to a man taken way before his time; naturally, the song is performed in glorious fashion. Even better, the fun doesn't stop at the conclusion of album closer *On The Hook*; a four-song encore follows that starts with a blistering *Contractor*, segues into *Ruin*, debuts *The Death Of Us* from the *Bill And Ted 3* soundtrack and climaxes with a thunderous *512*.

It's a storming return, yet the second show conspires to be even better. A decade and a half on, *Ashes Of The Wake* remains a modern metal classic and the likes of *Laid To Rest*, *Now You've Got Something To Die For* and *Omerta* still hit harder than whoever your favourite band happen to be – Randy screaming *'See who gives a fuck!'* in the former continues to rank among the greatest mosh calls ever written.

The true stars of the set, however, are the deeper cuts; *Blood Of The Scribe* receives just its second ever live outing – a ludicrous statistic given its face-melting nature – while the title track and the debut performance of *Remorse Is For The Dead* are further testament to the strength that Lamb Of God hold across their back catalogue. There's also an homage to debut album *New American Gospel*, celebrating its 20th birthday the day after the stream finishes, with *O.D.H.G.A.B.F.E* getting its first airing since 2001 and *Black Label* making a welcome return to land one final blow to the senses as the stream fades to black.

Randy said before the first night he hoped someone destroyed their living room watching the performances; a boom in furniture sales is certainly incoming. We all know metal music rules, and it does not get any better than this.

ELLIOT LEAVER

Randy Blythe: leader of the uprising, wrecker of upholstery

PRESS/BRYCE HALL

LACUNA COIL

ALCATRAZ, MILAN

Cristina Scabbia and co reanimate their Black Anima *opus*

WITNESSING A BAND joyfully getting back to the 'office' after an eight-month global pandemic-enforced tour break is one of the few plus-sides of these uncertain times. Presenting all the dramatic onstage visuals of a normal Lacuna Coil show, smoke machines and striking make-up to boot, the band broadcast a night in the Alcatraz venue in their hometown of Milan for a special online show celebrating last year's *Black Anima* in its entirety – including bonus tracks. It's a chance for fans to see every song receive the onstage treatment.

Donning their monochrome boiler suits from the album's tour and delivering *Sword Of Anger*'s gutsy notes for the first time with all their signature energy, the night gets off to a typically theatrical start. With a bright-eyed renewed energy and no usual crowd noise, the vocal discourse between Cristina Scabbia's heavenly cleans and Andrea Ferro's roars is more crystal clear than ever, most noticeable through the reflective *Now Or Never*.

The irony of belting out *Apocalypse* and its stunning guitar artistry in the current climate is not lost on the band tonight, emphasised by a faultless debut performance of *Under The Surface*'s ode to isolation, which carries even more depth in 2020. The poignant *The End Is All I Can See* also sees its first outing, neatly framed by the atmospherics of *Veneficium*'s emotional outpouring. Journeying through the punchy *Bad Things* into the ballsy *Layers Of Time* and closing on the gorgeous theatrics of *Black Anima*'s title track makes a powerful ending to the packed setlist, but not before one final surprise.

Once the band thank the viewers and leave the stage, Cristina performs a heartfelt rendition of *Save Me* with pianist Silvia Zanaboni, translating one of *Black Anima*'s most rousing odes into a moving tear-jerker. Despite fronting an empty venue, Lacuna Coil produce a stirring performance of an incredibly personal album, finding a global community even in times of separation.

ALI COOPER

Diego Cavallotti breaks out the riffs

Cristiana Scabbia suffers no separation anxiety

Lacuna Coil bring the Alcatraz venue to the boil

EMANUELA GIURANO

VENOM PRISON

HOTEL RADIO/THE DOME, LONDON

Death metal firebrands wring hope from the ruins

GIVEN HOW FAR they've come since opening four-band bills in now-defunct South Wales venues just four years ago, it'd be a travesty for one of Britain's finest exports to have their momentum felled by the ongoing 2020 shitshow. For as potent as their first two albums and latest collection, *Primeval*, are, it's in the live setting that Venom Prison's real impact is truly evident.

Even without a crowd of gobsmacked attendees, tonight's set from The Dome, streamed by Hotel Radio, ferociously underlines this point, with the band unleashing months of pent-up aggression and unhinged violence that seems on the cusp of tipping their precise delivery into a chaotic mess. While it's easy to be distracted by vocalist Larissa Stupar – who seems possessed as she throws herself around the stage in her commitment to expressing every caustic barb of *Uterine Industrialisation* and *Self Inflicted Violence* – the rhythm section's critical blows and Ash Gray and Ben Thomas's traded licks exhibit the Welsh quintet's sustained, combined delivery.

Power Trip t-shirts hang from the speakers with Larissa dedicating the set to their late tourmate Riley Gale before launching into *Corrode The Black Sun*'s frantic raw bluster. The sole *Animus* track is a welcome addition to the eight-song set dominated by 2019's *Samsara*, but it's the stabbing dynamics of opener *Matriphagy* through to the epic weight of closer *Implementing The Metaphysics Of Morals* that reveal why so many have bestowed the responsibility of death metal's standard bearers upon Venom Prison.

Asura's Realm and *Deva's Enemy* add melodic flourishes as a brief respite, yet there's more on display than a short, sharp cathartic blast of disdain. For of all their efforts to shine a light on the world's acceleration into the abyss, there's also faint optimism to be found among the band's resilience, manifesto and musical ambition, which leave a satisfying smile buried in the ruins.

ADAM REES

Larissa Stupar seeks a route ouf the abyss

JAKE OWENS

Trivium raise their banners high

TRIVIUM

YOUTUBE LIVE

Matt Heafy and co dig out a treasure chest from their vaults

THERE AREN'T MANY bands in metal at the moment that can hold a candle to Trivium. With the quality of their recorded output at an all-time high after this year's superb *What The Dead Men Say*, and with the band utilising livestreaming as well as any band on the planet with their thrilling A Light Or A Distant Mirror show only weeks previously, the gang have upped the ante once again: producing a full online show for free, live from their practice room, and concentrating on some of their more obscure material.

The vibe from the start feels very informal, with frontman Matt Heafy casually addressing those who have tuned in before launching into the first ever performance of new song *Bending The Arc Of Fear*. You won't be shocked to hear that, despite the relaxed vibe, Trivium are as tight as it is humanly possible for a band to be once they start playing. The telepathic connection between Heafy, fellow guitarist Corey Beaulieu and bassist Paulo Gregoletto has only been heightened by the addition of Alex Bent on drums, who nails the powerful crack and groove that Trivium require while adding some mindblowing technical chops.

For longtime fans of the band the setlist is a mouthwatering proposition, with hidden gems like *The Revanchrist*, *To The Rats* and *Of Prometheus And The Crucifix* getting rare airings and sounding inhumanly huge. One of the highlights comes from a deeply sad situation – with the show coming mere days after the tragic passing of Power Trip frontman Riley Gale, Trivium pay tribute to him by covering their anthemic *Executioner's Tax*, and nailing it in the process, showing just why so many people were so heartbroken by Riley's passing.

But tonight, it's about Trivium, from the incredible back catalogue they have amassed over two decades to their forward-thinking dedication to continue to deliver for their fans. "We won't get the credit for this, someone else who says it louder than us will," Matt says before the title track from *Ascendancy*. Not from us, Matt – we're happy to say that Trivium are currently setting all the standards.

STEPHEN HILL

ÅRABROT
JO QUAIL/COMA WALL
YOUTUBE LIVE

London promoters Chaos Theory always keep things interesting, and this lockdown sesh – equal parts informal Zoom chat and creative showcase – cycles repeatedly through three distinct yet complementary acts. Norway's **ÅRABROT** are one of modern rock's most thrilling bands, and become more intriguing as they shapeshift away from their noise-rock roots. Filmed in a church at midsummer, Karin Park and Kjetil Nernes perform within a ritualistic ring of animal skulls, their mercurial clangour stripped startlingly and beautifully down to just voice, 12-string guitar and pump organ. Cellist **JO QUAIL**, too, is a creatively restless spirit intent on pushing herself and her art. Seeing her play in her living room feels almost intrusive as she wrings plangent notes from her 200-year-old cello – her intense, exhilarating set mixing Bach, a piece penned by Venom Prison and her own complex, brooding work. **COMA WALL**, the secret identity of Oxfordshire doom-bringers Undersmile, mines territory that is emotionally heavy if easier on the ears than their main gig. The gloom-infused melodies and mournful harmonies recall the Unplugged sessions by Nirvana and Alice In Chains, serving as both foil and buffer for the session's more outré sounds.

ALEX DELLER

HEART OF A COWARD
SUBFRANTIC STUDIOS, KESTON

As the coronavirus continues to cast its dark shadow across the arts, Heart Of A Coward have joined the list of bands turning to the one-off livestream option to fill the void left by the absence of live shows. The Milton Keynes-based quintet, now synonymous with dynamic onstage performances, waste no time living up to their reputation as stalwarts of the UK metal scene via a 45-minute-in-full-HD set of audio-visual precision. Smashing headfirst into an explosive *Drown In Ruin*, there's a genuine confidence to Kaan Tasan's seamless mix of caustic screams and melodic cleans, which sit alongside thundering bass rumbles and monstrous breakdowns during an anthemic *Collapse*; the hair-raising latter inciting makeshift living room pits across the watching world. Multiple cameras switch between bandmembers while ambient soundbites and onscreen distortions ensure zero silence between songs; the sound quality is second to none. While the five-piece have truly settled into tracks from *The Disconnect*, there's a reassuring coherence to material plucked from across the HOAC back-catalogue, with *Hollow* and a bowel-rattling *Deadweight* rounding off a display of naysayer-defying proportions.

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

PRESS

DEVIN TOWNSEND

STAGEIT LIVE

Canada's patron saint of silliness ups his star quality

DEVIN TOWNSEND IS in space. Again. Determined to salvage the By Request, 'heavy' set he'd planned to drag around summer festivals, Vancouver's coffee-fuelled canucklehead has quite literally reached for the stars. The band he's assembled, featuring Samus Paulicelli on drums, Wes Hauch on guitar and Liam Wilson on bass, stand atop floating, futuristic platforms… in space. Cheers, green screen.

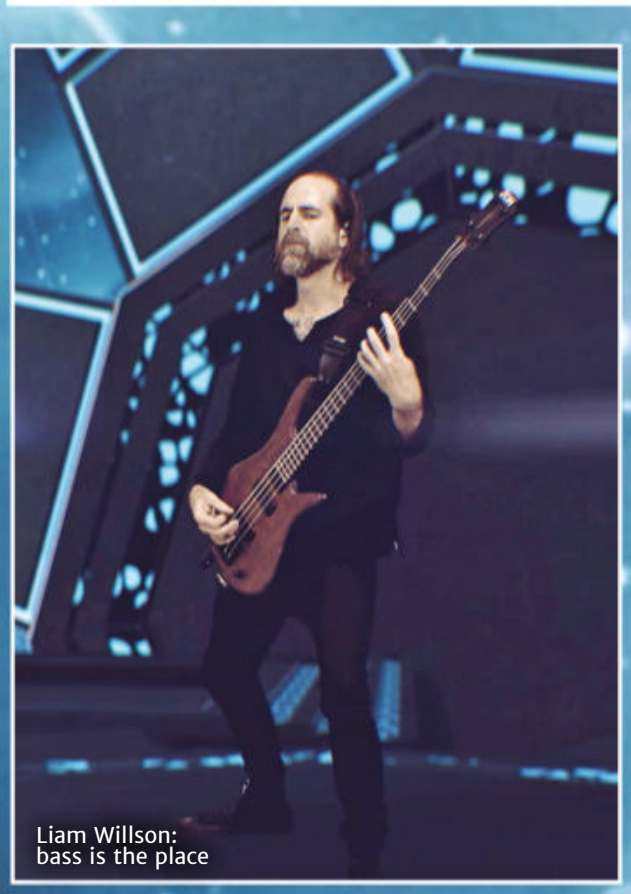
And in true by-request fashion, there's a smattering of diamonds and ever-so-slight dips. Songs from his previous outfit, Strapping Young Lad, sound monstrously heavy – Dev's vocal control has developed devilishly over the past decade, so to hear him nail *All Hail The New Flesh*'s opening high note, the imperious verses of *Love?*; to have him do *Almost Again*'s operatic warbling justice is proper wish list stuff. So when you get to *Deadhead*, which has squeezed its mid-tempo, eight-minute waistline into nearly every Devin setlist for the past few years, it makes you wonder who picked it. Still, everything looks incredible and the mix is god-tier, accentuating oddities like the improvised solo through *Hyperdrive*.

But what makes this night unforgettable is its unbridled positivity. The dramatic cinematography, littered with lens-flare even J.J. Abrams would baulk at, is often interrupted by Devin appearing below the video, live. During *Aftermath*, he starts a socially distanced moshpit with his team; in *By Your Command*, he sits with a plush octopus on his head. It's so stupid, and something that's indubitably Devin Townsend: sacred and profane, proverbially duelling with swords and sausages.

Despite being in space, it feels so close to a genuine gig – as Samus's obscenely tight double-kick finishes everything with *Detox*, you can almost reach out and lick Wes's sweaty forehead. Devin does his thank yous, tells us to keep on trucking, and it actually means something. The past 85 minutes have been uplifting beyond belief.

Devin, thank you.

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH



Liam Willson: bass is the place

Samus Paulicelli brings some gravity to the occasion

Devin Townsend: the heart of daftness

PRESS

FIVE MINUTES WITH SIMONE SIMONS EPICA

Motherhood made her a "wimp" but Simone still knows that her own instinct is the one to trust most

WORDS: ALI COOPER

What's the worst thing about being in a band?
"Missing my family and friends. The silver lining of our current situation is that I'm finally home for a longer time. Of course I have that itchy feeling about getting back onstage but it's such a special time in my son's life and he's more aware of me being there as a mother; now I can catch up on what I've been missing."

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
"My aunt said, 'You should wait until your voice has matured before you take singing lessons.' I didn't listen to her so the best advice was listening to my gut feeling that this was something I had to do. I got lessons and I got in touch with Mark Jansen, but if I'd waited like my aunt said, I think everything would've taken a different turn."

When the first time you felt like a rock star?
"When I'm playing huge festivals with a big audience. I never see myself as a famous person but those are the moments where you're like, 'Shit, everybody's looking at me', and everything just hits you."

What's been your worst experience on drugs?
"I suffer from insomnia so sometimes I have to take sleeping pills. While recording this new album, I woke up in the night and took a pill. The next morning, I drove to the studio and parked the car, but the car rolled down the hill so I had to jump in and pull the handbrake. I can drive perfectly but the pill was still in my system so I wasn't into my everyday automatic movements."

Have you picked up any hobbies during lockdown?
"I started off with good intentions of finally learning to play the piano because our son's learning and he's surpassed me. Whenever I practise, he comes over like, 'No, you've got to play it like this!' He pushes me away from the piano and I don't have a chance to practise. I have so many hobbies, like photography, and I also have a blog!"

When was the last time you cried?
"I'm not a crybaby but motherhood has made me into a wimp! If kids are hurt in movies or I see something on Instagram with a sick child, I get teary-eyed. During my wedding ceremony, I took half an hour to say my wedding vows instead of two minutes because I kept on crying. It was embarrassing!"

How are you handling teaching your son at home now?
"Lots of red wine! That's probably the last time I cried because I was just so frustrated – everybody wasn't dealing with the situation very well and the insecurity about what's happening to our tours, how we're going to make money and everything. Plus, our kid is suddenly at home so we were all on edge. It was difficult but I found out I could never become a teacher."

What's been your proudest moment with Epica so far?
"Anniversary shows and special shows when we have a new album out always have an extra spark for me. I quite enjoyed the shows I did when I was pregnant – there were basically seven bandmembers onstage and I was so proud. My lifelong dreams were to become a singer and a mother so those shows were like everything coming together."

After 18 years together, what has Epica grown to mean to you?
"Epica has been my therapy over the last couple of years. Now listening to other Epica albums, I can feel why fans tell us our music has helped them. It's really been Epica that's kept me going and brought out my inner strength."

What message would you like fans to take from your new album, *Eight*?
"Believe in yourself and no matter how bad life goes, music will always pull you through. For me, *Eight* is a record of what's going on in our lives as a society and as individuals. I had quite a rough time leading up to the new record and I put that all in the music. I hope we can give this back to everybody, that they can also get through hardships in life." H

"EPICA IS MY THERAPY"

***EIGHT* IS OUT NEXT YEAR VIA NUCLEAR BLAST**

PRESS/TIM TRONCKOE INSETS: BIG J

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